#76 The Magazine of Adventure Gaming $3.00

Space Gamer

The School of Gamemastering

Steve Jackson Games University

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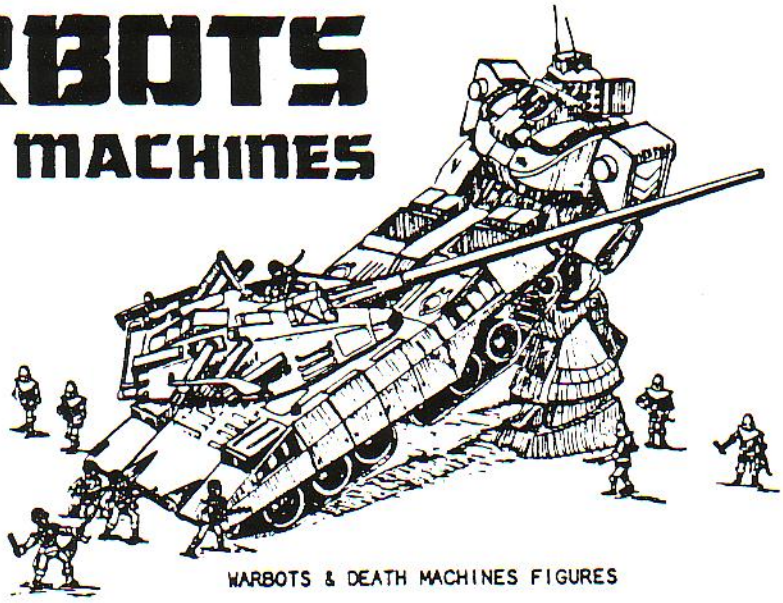
& DEATH MACHINES



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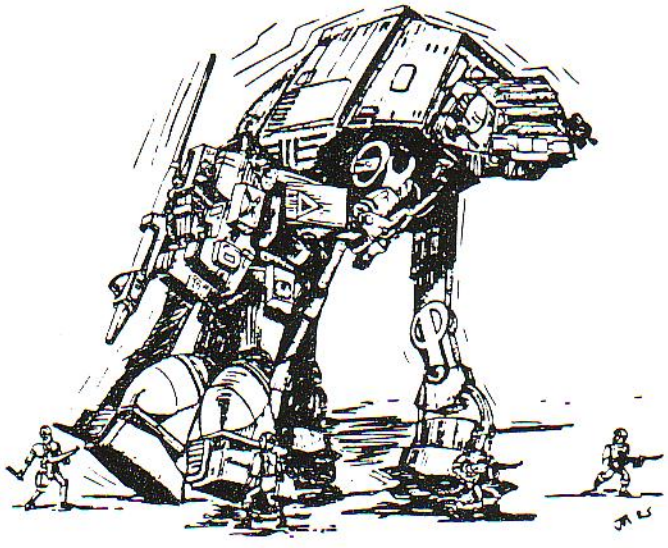

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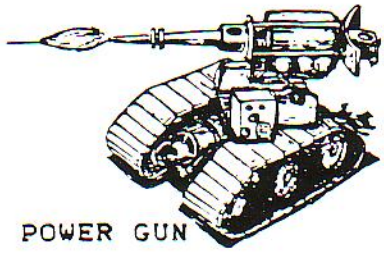

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The Last Word

Not much point beating around the bush — you now hold in your hands the last issue of *Space Gamer* magazine . . . in its current form. But don't panic. As of October 1, 1985, *SG* belongs to Diverse Talents Incorporated, the same folks who recently bought *Fire & Movement* from us.

Space Gamer is about to go through a metamorphosis. Here's the deal: DTI plans to include a *Space Gamer* section in each upcoming issue of their own general-interest game magazine, *The V.I.P. of Gaming*. And we (the Steve Jackson Games editorial staff) will continue to edit the *Space Gamer* section.

This is a pretty radical concept — which should end up benefiting all of us. *Space Gamer* subscribers will continue to receive a general interest magazine (*The V.I.P. of Gaming* — with the *Space Gamer* section); we keep our finger on the pulsebeat of the game business and continue to provide solid, unbiased reviews, rules variants for your favorite games, and articles about old favorites and some games you might have overlooked; DTI, a relatively young company, is assured of quality material (he said immodestly) on a regular basis.

What's the Story?

But why, you have every right to ask, is this happening? Wasn't it just six issues ago that I wrote in this very column of my desire to return *SG* to its roots — lots of authoritative reviews, a healthy dose of irreverence, in short, all the things that got me (and, I suspect, most of you) reading *SG* in the first place?

Yes, I said all those things and more in *SG* #70, and my enthusiasm remains undimmed. But since that time, a lot of things have happened. Steve Jackson, *SG*'s publisher, turned his attention to designing what we all hope will be the best RPG around and found himself with less and less time for *Space Gamer*. I found myself working on *TOON* supplements and *Man to Man* supplements at the same time my overall responsibilities at SJ Games grew beyond my wildest expectations. I had to leave *Space Gamer* in the capable hands of Assistant Editor Allen Varney. (Luckily, Allen and I had pretty similar ideas about the direction *SG* was supposed to take, so that was never a problem.) Everybody was clamoring for our games; not so many clamored for *Space Gamer*. In fact, our game sales have been so good, Steve Jackson Games is heading for its best year ever . . . but *Space Gamer* is taking up time we need for the games.

In *Space Gamer* 73, I let loose all of my frustrations about this, so I'll refer those of you unfamiliar with the sorry state of the game magazine business to that issue. Suffice to say, we had to free ourselves to produce the games which got us all into this crazy business in the first place. DTI stepped in and gave us the opportunity we'd been looking for.

Now we intend to take advantage of that opportunity. We'll be turning out more games, more supplements, more expansion sets than ever before. We're looking to break into new markets, taking our games places you never dreamed of, making moves we couldn't have made just . . . well, just six issues ago. Stick with us.

A Loving Look Back

SG's upcoming metamorphosis isn't the first the magazine has been through, and chances are it won't be the last. Seems like this is as good a time as any to take a brief look back at *SG*'s past. *Space Gamer* (then ***The*** *Space Gamer*) got started ten years ago, under the direction of Howard Thompson of Metagaming Concepts, the company which introduced the "microgame" concept.

That first issue was all of 20 digest-size pages long, including the cover. For 70 cents, the reader got some industry news, some fiction, a ***Stellar Conquest*** strategy article, and a game-rating survey (the top-rated game? ***Gorgamella*** . . . just ahead of ***Dungeons & Dragons,*** which was itself just ahead of ***Space Huk***). Anybody remember ***Gorgamella*** or ***Space Huk***?

That first issue set the tone for all future issues. In an open letter to gamers, editor/publisher Thompson said: ". . . *The Space Gamer* will serve as a communications forum for gamers and a prod. A forum for the phenomenon of science fiction in game form and a prod for excellence and growth. You have our pledge that everything in our means to support and improve the hobby for gamers will be done."

Since that first issue, *SG* has gone through two publishers (soon to be three), several editors, and a format change (from digest-size to full-size), but that initial goal remained unchanged.

Highlights of the early days included a review of ***Dungeons & Dragons*** in issue 2, one of ***Tunnels & Trolls*** in issue 3, and one of ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** in issue 4 — not a bad record. In *SG* #5 (March-May 1976) it was reported that *The Strategic Review*, published by TSR Hobbies, would change its format and its name — beginning with the June 1976 issue, the magazine would be called *The Dragon*. So much for *Dragon*'s claim to the title "oldest game magazine"!

SG #13 featured an editorial by Howard Thompson about the "coming of age" of science fiction and fantasy gaming. He wrote, "Every major game publisher now has its foot in the market. Battleline, Game Designers' Workshop, Avalon Hill, Tactical Studies Rules, and Simulations Publications all now have SF&F games." He went on to comment that *The Dragon*'s circulation had topped 6500!

Just seven years after the "coming of age," all but three of the "major game publishers" are out of business, and that circulation figure of 6500 looks positively puny beside *Dragon*'s current 100,000-plus audience. Unfortunately, 6500 is about where *SG* is right now — despite the changes in publishers, editors, format, and everything else.

Which goes a long way toward explaining why *Space Gamer* 76 is the last issue we're publishing. Best of luck to DTI. We'll do our best to keep them and, more importantly, *Space Gamer* readers happy. Let us know how you think we're doing. □

What's Coming

The *Space Gamer* section will debut in the second issue of *The V.I.P. of Gaming*, which is scheduled for publication in December. This is the first issue that *Space Gamer* readers will receive as subscription carry over.

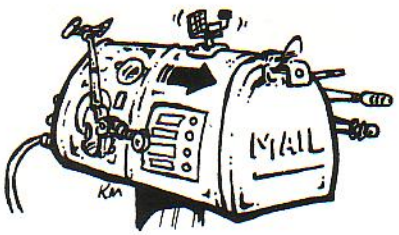
Car Wars is featured, with two variant articles and a scenario devoted to SJ Games' bestseller. Other articles include "New Cards for Avalon Hill's ***Dune***" and a description of a nasty new device for well-heeled supervillains (exclusively from *Crimetek* — "We're building a badder tomorrow!").

We had no room for reviews in this installment, but rest assured that capsule reviews will continue in the new *Space Gamer*.

We'll be dealing exclusively with science fiction games now; fantasy, PBM, and other topics will have their own sections and editors.

Writers, send your sf-related manuscripts directly to us. Publishers, send review copies of science fiction games to us. Games and manuscripts on other subjects should be sent to DTI, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

A note to our writers: We'll be forwarding non-sf manuscripts to the appropriate *V.I.P.* editors. If we've accepted your review or sf manuscript, sit tight: It'll see print eventually. If you have questions, write to us. We love to get letters.



Letters

Address correspondence to *Space Gamer*, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. We prefer letters that are typed and double-spaced. And please give your name and address, okay?

A Note from the Heroes

George Mac Donald, co-designer of the Hero System, points out that the starship combat system offered in "Instant Starships for Hero Games" (*SG* 75) does not follow the vehicle combat rules in ***Justice Inc.*** and other Hero releases. He offers alternative rules consistent with these.

Regarding starships in combat, Mac Donald says, "The OCV of any weapon is equal to the gunner's OCV plus any [skill] levels with that weapon. The DCV of the ship is the DCV of the pilot. The ship's thrust adds +1 to its DCV for every 3 Gs.

"A single character acting as both pilot and gunner takes −1 to both OCV and DCV. A Dodge maneuver adds +3 to DCV and subtracts the same amount from the OCV of the pilot and any gunner.

"Super-powered characters in ships can be regarded as 'unmounted vehicle weapons' using the ***Justice Inc.*** rules. They take −1 OCV for every 2 DCV of the vehicle."

Correction

I rarely respond to a review of one of Palladium Books' games, as a review is merely the humble opinion of the reviewer. However, in *Space Gamer* #74 reviewer Jerry Epperson has made a *major error* in his review of ***The Palladium Role-Playing Game***, which I feel needs correction.

Mr. Epperson's major complaint was that the use of armor provided characters with "nothing more than a pool of hit points which do not cause serious injury to the characters. Normal hit points are *never* affected until the S.D.C. (Structural Damage Capacity of the armor) pool is reduced to zero. In effect, one must completely hack off an opponent's armor and use up his 'trick maneuvers' before physical damage is taken." Epperson further complains that the "(un)godly number of hit points" is unrealistic and makes combat a "drawn-out affair."

Indeed *if* this were true, combat would be drawn out and unrealistic. My problem with these statements is that they are *completely erroneous!!* Yes, armor provides a certain amount of protection; however, one does *not* have to completely hack off an opponent's armor. Apparently Epperson missed this short paragraph, printed *entirely* in **bold**, regarding armor ratings and penetration:

> "The attacker must roll higher than the defender's armour rating to penetrate the armour and inflict physical damage (Hit Points) to the defender. Die rolls under the Armour Rating strike the protective armour, damaging ONLY the armour (not the character)."

The following two paragraphs explain, with examples, exactly how armor rating and S.D.C. work — which is basically that if the attacker's opponent is wearing chain armor with an A.R. of 13, the player must roll 14-20 on a twenty-sided die roll to bypass/penetrate the armor and do damage directly to the character's hit points. A roll of 13 or below may hit, but does damage to the protective armor (S.D.C.). I'm trying to keep this explanation as short as possible without sounding confusing. The bottom line is that a character can be killed without his armor even being scratched, depending on his attacker's rolls to strike. [Since the system was] playtested for two and a half years prior to publication, as well as after, I can assure you that combat is extremely fast, realistic, and deadly.

As far as Epperson's reference to "trick maneuvers," I can only assume that he is referring to such abilities as parry, dodge, multiple attacks per melee, kick attacks, critical strikes, stun, and bonuses from training or physical attributes. I wouldn't call these trick maneuvers, I would call them realistic combat maneuvers.

I hope that you will print this letter to correct the blatant errors in Mr. Epperson's review.

Sincerely,
Kevin Siembieda
Palladium Books

Unavoidable Bias?

I write to take issue with your review of ***Encyclopedia Harnica 3-11*** that appeared in *Space Gamer* 74 (May/June 1985). I would preface my remarks by saying that the reviewer, Mr. Varney, is certainly entitled to his opinions on any game. However, I feel that a few points should be made.

My first, and perhaps overriding concern is an ethical one. *Space Gamer* is clearly and undeniably a house organ for Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. While articles relating to other companies' products are run in *Space Gamer*, it is a house organ in the same way that *Dragon, Strategy & Tactics*, and *The Wargamer* are. I have no intention of demeaning or belittling *Space Gamer* or any other publication by calling them house organs, and I do not intend to imply that a house organ is somehow inferior to other types of periodicals. I do believe, however, that as a house organ *Space Gamer* and similar publications have certain ethical responsibilities when reviewing other companies' products. I note that several of the reviews in issue 74 are signed by *Space Gamer* staffers; all of whom, one assumes, are employees or associates of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. I think that it would serve *Space Gamer* readers better if there was no question of bias in any review you do. It is difficult not to be cynical when the only Steve Jackson Games product reviewed is described in glowing terms without even a hint of criticism. I would suggest that *Space Gamer* readers might find reviews more useful if they were done by an unquestionable source. I might point out that *Strategy & Tactics* used to run a review column by Sid Sackson who was not, to the best of my knowledge, ever a direct employee of SPI. That column always seemed fair and untainted by the unavoidable bias that must creep in when one reviews a competing product.

My second point is the tone of Mr. Varney's review of ***Encyclopedia Harnica***. He states, "What makes it hard to review ***Encyclopedia Harnica*** is its periodical nature and the awesome depth of the material. The detail is copious, the range impressive — not to say forbidding. AS I AM NOT CONVERSANT WITH HARN all I can do is wimp out . . ." (emphasis mine). He later states "this has been a NON-REVIEW of ***Encyclopedia Harnica*** . . ." (emphasis mine). To be brutally frank, if Mr. Varney is "not conversant" and can only provide a "non-review," he has no business reviewing the product in question. I do not take issue with Mr. Varney's (or anyone else's) right to express opinions about ***Encyclopedia Harnica***, be such opinions negative or positive, but I think it is irresponsible to publish a review in which the reviewer admits a lack of knowledge of the product.

Thirdly, one of Mr. Varney's criticisms does not even relate to the products being reviewed. The review is clearly headlined ENCYCLOPEDIA HARNICA 3-11, yet Mr. Varney attempts to make one of his points by commenting on Volume 1, one of the issues not being reviewed.

Frankly, if a house organ is going to do reviews of competing products it has an obligation to its readers, itself, and the gaming hobby in general to make every effort to provide reviews whose integrity and value is beyond question.

Edwin King, Editor
Columbia Games

We do make that effort; in fact, our integrity — though apparently not "beyond question" — is very ***rarely*** *questioned. We seem to have different definitions of "house organ," but such quibbling is not to the point. We avoid the "unavoidable bias" you speak of; house organ or not (and it's not), we don't use SG reviews to take potshots at competitors. We approach a product as* ***gamers:*** *Is the product worth the asking price, how well does it play, who is it intended for? Company employment doesn't enter into it. Unless you're accusing us of being shills for SJ Games — which doesn't appear to be your intent — I don't think the statement requires further support. The reviews speak for themselves.*

My purpose in running the ***Encyclopedia Harnica*** *notice — which was clearly labelled a* ***non-review*** *— was to dramatize our need for an informed review. Had I known you would misinterpret the notice as a review, and take offense at the misinterpretation, I would not have written it; I did not intend to offend Columbia Games.*

—AV

Still More State of the Art

I'd like to congratulate you on producing what is now surely the most intelligent and interesting games magazine in the Anglophone world. (I'd say the known universe, but as I speak only English and a bit of Latin I can't know for sure.)

The recent discussion of what constitutes a "state-of-the-art" roleplaying game is a prime example. Both the original article and the responding letters have evinced a high degree of intelligence.

I think, however, whenever one talks about "the ideal roleplaying game," one is bound to be wrong. The state of the art continues to advance. Let me provide an example:

Several years ago, a group of friends and I began work on a game, then called ***High Fantasy***. (This was before a game using the same name was published.) We put together a list of what a "state-of-the-art" roleplaying game should include. The list now makes me wince.

We wanted three (count 'em three) entirely separate magic systems; a "realistic" combat system that made ***Chivalry & Sorcery*** look like Go Fish; descriptions of animals and "monsters" in biological and ecological terms; rules for world design incorporating physics, geology, oceanography, meteorology, sociology, and anthropology; comprehensive culture descriptions which involved mapping provinces down to the township level; a religious system an order of magnitude more cumbersome than the cults for ***RuneQuest***; and a skill system which included everything from shuriken to carpentry to scrimshaw.

Were we crazy? No, buddy, we weren't. At the time, we were ahead of our times. We, like other sophisticated roleplayers, were looking for a *com-*

plete roleplaying game which included systems to handle anything which arose during play. We wanted to have rules for asphyxiation, starvation, thirst, exposure, and explosive decompression; we didn't want to have to improvise virtually everything from scratch, the way ***D&D*** made us do.

But times and perceptions have changed. ***RuneQuest III*** did most of what we wanted to do — and it appears, I believe, too late to catch the mood we felt.

I can't speak for too many other people, but I no longer want "sophistication" in my roleplaying games, not if it means generating a character or fighting a melee round takes hours. I've decided that system is irrelevant; what matters is roleplaying. Yes, some systems encourage roleplaying better than others; but the best system is one which doesn't get in the players' way, which lets them get on with the job.

Frankly, if I had to run a fantasy campaign today, I'd probably use the ***Tunnels & Trolls*** rules. Yes, they're dumb, but they're simple, and they're adequate to my needs.

What I think ought to be incorporated in "state-of-the-art" roleplaying games are systems which encourage genuine roleplaying; which encourage gamemasters to invent interesting situations; and which evoke an appropriate mood.

Do I have any other criteria? Only one; a game ought to be parsimonious. By this, I mean it should not use three systems when one will do. The best example is ***RuneQuest***, which, in final analysis, has only three systems; skill rolls, requisite versus requisite combat, and requisite checks. Compare that with ***D&D***, which has a different system for every circumstance. Parsimony results in an equally sophisticated game at a lower price in rules complexity.

Greg Costikyan
Jersey City, NJ

Champions a state-of-the-art RPG? Well, if you like counting up 5-20 six-sided dice in two different ways, juggling awkward character generation rules, and having to deal with hex maps, I suppose it is. As for ***Espionage***, why have twelve phases when an agent won't use more than four?

Actually, I like ***Champions***, don't get me wrong; I just don't consider it state-of-the-art. I think the closest thing to a state-of-the-art RPG is the ***Bushido/Aftermath/Daredevils*** system, despite its critics; but why they felt obliged to make alterations from the ***Bushido*** system is beyond my comprehension.

FASA's ***Star Trek***, with its straight percentile rolling and generation system that allows for player choice in what skills and, to some degree, how skilled they are, also comes close, but with the release of the ***Doctor Who*** RPG, it seems they are not going to stay with a "standard" system.

My vote for a system which, if expanded, could be adaptable to any RPG genre is (drum roll, screams of anguish from critics everywhere . . .) ***James Bond 007!*** In the opinion of both myself and the local players I have dealt with, the system is basically sound, and could be used in such genres as "ghosthunting" and Wild West adventuring with little or no changes (I'm working on a *Wild Wild West* variation even as I write this off . . .). A little bit of imaginative work and a "magic" system, with spells grouped into small, related categories, each learnable by the expenditure of generation points, could turn the game into a workable fantasy RPG.

Yes, I know ***James Bond 007*** is receiving a lot of bad rep from the game critics, but I haven't had any complaints yet. In any case, ***James Bond 007*** seems to meet the criteria: a simple system requiring two 20-sided dice (six-sided die optional), a generation system that allows players a wide variety of choices, and well-designed, high-quality supplementary materials. Oh well, I suppose the critics will take their shots at me . . .

Steve Crow
Iowa City, IA

I just received issue #74 of *Space Gamer* and I'm very pleased with it. The mailing cover was practically destroyed, but the magazine was only bent slightly. Thank you for those mailing covers.

It's a pity only we subscribers got "IQ 6 Talents for ***TFT***," and I was also impressed by "RPGSpeak." I have to admit, though, it's a bit like hunting dead horses from a helicopter: That Certain Game has been kidded to pieces before.

I'd like to add something to the State of the Art Debate, but not much. I pretty much agree with everything Varney said in his original article except for the bit about a plethora of characteristics (you know, gaggle of geese, pride of lions, plethora of characteristics). I feel very strongly that one of the strongest points of the Hero System is the wide variety of numbers describing a character: using Hero, it's possible to have a nimble character who takes a lot of time to fight (high DEX, low SPD), people who can fight hand-to-hand more effectively than others (Fist is not a predefined weapon), even someone with a glass jaw (2X STUN from all attacks landing on the Head location) if you integrate ***Champions*** and ***Espionage!***, and other unusual combinations of weird combat effects and characteristics. Whereas in ***The Fantasy Trip***, a strong person is automatically very healthy; and being extremely skilled with weapons (high DX) also means you have a pretty good chance of performing weird acrobatic maneuvers. Not that I dislike ***TFT***, I just feel it took a good thing a bit too far.

However, I do acknowledge the danger of too many characteristics: I personally feel that Hero is poised right on the edge of diminishing returns. But it is certainly, for me at least, on the right side of the line.

Six-sided dice: Amen. I do, however, feel that there is a place — a small place — for percentile dice. I like the bell curve myself, but percentiles give players and the referee a better "feel" for the odds of an action succeeding. Not that this is necessarily a good thing, but percentiles do at least make for rather nice random generation tables.

Speaking of random generation tables, I'd like to contribute a table even less useful than any you have so far published:

Random Droll Comment Generator for *Doctor Who*

1) "Pity about Baronet Sire Ranulph Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennies. Wore a high starched collar to Wimbledon. Sliced his own head off."

2) "As I said to Lord Nelson after he lost his arm, 'Horatio old chap,' I said, 'be more careful in the future. Otherwise there won't be enough left of you to build a monument over.'"

3) "Oh, yes, that's the Holy Grail. Must remember to bring that back some time."

4) "Beastly sorry about your wife and children. These Sontarans are touchy, eh?"

5) "Sometimes I regret teaching Aaron Burr how to shoot."

6) "You remind me of a girl named Leela. Your temper's not as good, though."

Obviously, the droll comments must be carefully altered to fit the precise situation in which they are uttered, but the referee should find this a valuable guide.

John Nowak
LaGrangeville, NY

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DC Heroes Design Notes

by Greg Gorden

When Mayfair Games offered me a chance to get paid for reading comic books, I counted my blessings and accepted. Of course I would have to design a game, ***DC Heroes***, based on these comic books, but that seemed a trivial consideration next to an opportunity to re-enter comic fandom full speed ahead. Gloating in an unseemly manner, I went to my local comic book shop. I bought every DC Comic released that month, read them, and then went back for back issues. Hey, this was fun! The DC Comics were great. They told stories involving hundreds of characters — on dozens of worlds — across several millenia of time . . . Uh-oh, *this* could be trouble. I kept reading the comics, but I was now concentrating on how I was going to design DC into the game.

The first issue to be decided was the scope of the game. Mayfair had a very specific licensing agreement, limiting them to a given set of characters, places, and objects. The license covered only a small fraction of the DC Universe. I decided the scope of the game had to be much larger than the set given in the license. I wanted a player to be able to run his or her favorite DC characters, whether or not we had a license for them.

The second issue was related to the first: Did the game simulate portions of the DC Universe in detail, or was the game system general enough to be valid for most of the DC Universe? I felt that two important points favored a comprehensive game system:

1) Once a player or gamemaster has learned the system, all of the other rules should fit into that system. A well-designed comprehensive system gains more from simplicity than it loses in simulation detail.

2) The DC Universe has a "slipperiness" to it. Different writers have different ideas about the same characters. Characters gain and lose abilities, and the exact nature of a character's powers and skills will change from writer to writer. A comprehensive system is general enough to handle the variations. A GM in 1988 will not have to rewrite the system in order to play in the 1988 DC Universe.

The final design issue was the level of complexity of the game. Marketing wanted as simple a game as possible in order to attract non-gamers who read DC Comics. My playtesters wanted a system with more meat to it that TSR's ***Marvel Super Heroes***. I wanted a game which would do justice to the DC Universe. I decided to aim for a complexity midway between ***Marvel Super Heroes*** and Hero Games' ***Champions***.

APs: A Universal Yardstick

During the initial design stages I had only an abstract idea of how the ***DC Heroes*** system would work. I envisioned a "black box" which resolved all actions in the game. This black box would take as input positive and negative variables affecting the action, factor in a dice roll, and output a result. In order to compare all of the variables they had to be measured in the same way. The unit of measure for ***DC Heroes*** is the AP (for Attribute Point), which measures all of a character's attributes such as Dexterity, Strength, Body, and Intelligence. APs also measure time, distance, weight, and information. So if a character has a Dexterity of 5 APs, he can run 5 APs of distance in a single phase. A character with a Strength of 11 APs can lift 11 APs of weight.

Perhaps the most complicated concept in ***DC Heroes*** is the AP scale. I had to fit Jimmy Olsen and Superman on the same scale, so the scale could not be linear (a linear scale is one in which a character with a strength of 2X is twice as strong as a character with a strength of X) unless I was willing to give Superman a Strength of 944,156,537,062,814,237. As character sheets filled with 18-digit attributes did not appeal to me, I made the AP scale logarithmic. In this scale 12 APs of weight is 1000 times as much weight as 2 APs, an object 15 APs of distance away is 1000 times as far away as one which is 5 APs away. A difference of 10 APs is a difference of a factor of 1000, and a difference of 1 AP is usually a factor of 2.

On this scale Jimmy Olsen has a strength of 2, Batman has a Strength of 5, and Superman has a Strength of 50. Batman has an Intelligence of 12, as does Superman, Jimmy Olsen has an Intelligene of 2, and Braniac has an Intelligence of 26. The distance from Chicago, Illinois to Phoenix, Arizona is 21 APs. An hour is 10 APs of time. The game has lists of APs and their real world equivalents, while the gamemaster screen has a shorter list of the APs most often used in play. The AP scale allows play of the full range of abilities found in DC characters while keeping the numbers down to two digits.

The Action and Result Tables: The Black Box Revealed

I wanted these two tables to be able to handle every action in ***DC Heroes*** which would not automatically succeed. I broke down every action into two general steps:

1) What is the chance of successfully performing the action?

2) What is the result of the action?

The Action Table answers the first question. The Action Table cross-indexes the Acting Value (the factors helping the action) with the Opposing Value (the factors opposing the action). The number at the intersection of the Acting and Opposing Value is the probability of performing the action. If your roll is greater than or equal to this value (on a roll of two ten-sided dice added together), then you have succeeded at the action.

The Result Table tells you what the result of the action is. The Result Table cross-indexes the Effect Value (how effective the character is at performing the action) with the Resistance Value (the target's ability to resist the effects). In ***DC Heroes*** it is possible to succeed at an action while having virtually no effect. While this may seem strange to veteran roleplayers, it makes sense in the world of ***DC Heroes***; if the Batman is attempting to hit the Empire State Building, odds are he will hit it — but it is extremely improbable that he will significantly damage the structure. Superman, on the other hand . . .

There are mechanics which alter this basic procedure. Rolling very well on the Action Table will increase the outcome on the Result Table. Characters have a store of Hero Points which can modify either of the tables. But these two tables are the heart of the game. With them I began to explore the DC Universe from a new perspective.

The DC Universe: A Tourist's View

I continued to read all the DC Comics I could without sacrificing too many nights' sleep. I began to attach numbers to the characters, work out the powers and skills, and develop the character design system. I began to babble to my wife, "Wow! Wonder Woman must have rolled a 32 to do that! How many Hero Points does Swamp Thing have? Is Terminator tougher than the Batman? Who would win an arm-wrestling contest between Starfire and Cyborg?"

Luckily for my marriage, I was soon put in contact with Bob Greenberger at DC. Bob Greenberger is an editor, handling *Batman* and *Detective Comics* among others, and is steeped in DC lore. Bob had to spend a quarter of an eon answering the sort of questions usually thought up by demoniacally inspired ten-year-olds.

Q: Who will win a fight between Terra and Zatanna, as each of them has the same amount of Earth Control power?

A: Zatanna will win, because her power is magical. In the universe which emerges from the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* magic will play a more important role than it has in the past.

Q: Can Superman lift the Earth?

Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Jimmy Olsen, Braniac, Swamp Thing, Terminator, Starfire, Cyborg, *Detective Comics*, Terra, Zatanna, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Cyborg, Green Lantern, Central City, Omega Men, the Vegan System, *The New Teen Titans*, Flash, Gotham City, Metropolis, Star City, S.T.A.R. Labs, Donna Troy, Wonder Girl, the Joker, Gorilla Grodd, Raven, Jason Todd, Robin, Lex Luthor, Elongated Man, Trigon, the Man of Steel, Nightwing, kryptonite, Green Arrow, Kid Flash, and all components thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc.

A: Not normally. These days Superman would have to make an extraordinary effort to lift the earth. Superman's future powers will be slightly less impressive than they are now.

Q: Could Cyborg crush Green Lantern's ring?

A: Yes. A Green Lantern's ring is mined from an exotic but natural ore which could be crushed by great strength.

Q: Just where is Central City?

A: Gee Greg, did I tell you that Green Lantern's ring could be crushed by Cyborg?

Out of enthusiasm for the project, or at least a sense of self-preservation, Bob wrote an introduction to the DC Universe (included in the game) which answered several of my questions. Todd Klein, author of *Omega Men*, sent me his Omega Men Index, which is an excellent primer on the Vegan System. The Vegan System is included in the game. Marv Wolfman, author of *The New Teen Titans*, and I met at a Las Vegas convention to discuss the Titans. The Titans were corrected to conform with Marv's view of his characters. Wolfman worked with Ed Zamora, an architect, who designed the Teen Titans tower for the game. Dick Giordano did not like the original cover of the game, so he and George Perez did a new one. Mike DeCarlo did several pieces of interior art, as well as several of the character cards. I was really excited and pleased with DC's involvement with the game.

The DC Universe: The Shape of Things to Come

The DC Universe is a big place. The writers and artists had built it piece by piece, as their stories demanded it. The demands of a good comic book can be met that way, but it was more difficult to design a game that way. Central City has to be in one place, and enough information must be given on the city that a gamemaster is not entirely on his own when running an adventure in the Flash's home town. Brian Reid, Jon Coke, and I delved into the Asset, a 1500+ page handwritten summary of every DC comic written from 1935 until 1982, for information on the cities. We sought out every comic we could find in the collection of friends and Northwestern University. Still there were gaps and inconsistencies . . . so we made it up, staying as true to the style of the DC Universe as possible. Central City, Gotham City, Metropolis, and Star City were given maps and peculiar nuggets of gamemaster information: What neighborhood does Jimmy Olsen live in anyway? How far is that from the Metropolis headquarters of S.T.A.R. Labs? We then waited nervously for DC's approval of the material. DC approved it, then went one step further . . . the cities we created will become part of the writer's guide for the DC books which are set in those cities. I was psyched. We had to be doing something right.

The next big issue was *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. The *Crisis* maxi-series is the most important series in DC's history. *Crisis* is redefining the DC Universe, streamlining it, making it consistent and coherent. Unfortunately, the game was scheduled to be released in the middle of the maxi-series' run, and design work would have to be completed barely after the start of *Crisis*. Bob Greenberger and Marv Wolfman kept me informed as best they could, considering that not all of the the details of *Crisis* have been worked out yet. The information was helpful, sometimes crucial, to the design of the game. But I could not tell the reader how the DC Universe is going to be at the end of *Crisis* without bring the Wrath of DC upon a small midwestern game company. So I did what I could; specifically, the "physics" of the post-*Crisis* universe have been built into the game. Magic works in line with the new DC Universe, the powers and skills have been re-tuned to be in harmony with the characters after *Crisis*. As far as the characters themselves . . . well, let's say that some of those we do not mention were not mentioned for a reason.

Stories: Telling Tales in DC Heroes

I had the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of the game. I had a good start on the DC Universe. But I still had a big problem: *The New Teen Titans* #50. In that issue, Donna Troy (Wonder Girl) gets married. The issue has nary a villain, and the story is about the swirl of character interaction at the wedding. Here was a story which, in game terms, was pure roleplaying. "The Wedding of Donna Troy" was the culmination of several storylines which had been woven into the previous two dozen issues of *Teen Titans*, with a few storylines brought in from other books as well. I enjoyed the issue immensely.

How was I going to help players and gamemasters run an adventure like "The Wedding of Donna Troy"? I discussed the problem with Eric, a friend of mine, as he valiantly guided his 1966 Barracuda through the snow. The end result was a safe arrival home and the beginning of Subplots.

Subplots are all the storylines you see in comics which receive a few panels to a few pages each issue. They rarely involve the main villain of the focal story; they are the stories of the lives of the heroes when they are not bashing villains. A blossoming romance, a new friend, a parent who is dying, a parade in honor of a hero's achievements, a secret identity which has been discovered, a long-standing enmity towards one villain, getting a new job: These are a few of the things which occupy the time and thoughts of a hero.

I saw Subplots as a crucial part of roleplaying in *DC Heroes*. Subplots became a system so far unique in roleplaying games. A player chooses a general category of Subplot, such as Family, Friends, Secret Past, Job, Romance, or a Complication with one of the hero's powers. If the player has an idea which does not fit into one of the given categories, he chooses a Miscellaneous Subplot. He then outlines one or two characters important to his Subplot, and a brief summary of what is going on in it. The player can add as much detail as he wishes, but all Subplot elements are subject to gamemaster approval.

For a Romance Subplot the characters might be Lynn Davis, the romantic interest, and Cris Davis, a twin sister who gets her kicks embarrassing Lynn's boyfriends. Lynn is the hero's tutor in German, aiding the good guy in his struggle against Metropolis University's language requirement. The hero and Lynn are just beginning to be romantically involved.

This thumbnail sketch provides a springboard for mini-adventures revolving around the romantic interest between Lynn and the hero. Either the gamemaster or the hero may suggest the next chapter in a Subplot. There is a list of questions, a checklist, for both the gamemaster and the player to help them develop viable Subplots. Other players' characters may cross over into the hero's Subplot, just as they do in the comics.

There are provisions for a gamemaster ending a Subplot ("Fading Out"), and a way for a Player to ditch a Subplot which has become too bleak or uncomfortable to play ("Pulling The Plug"). There is a system that allows the gamemaster to propose a Subplot to a player which accurately gauges the possible consequences of the Subplot, *without* revealing the story to the player. Every effort has been made to create a system which will make ***DC Heroes*** interactive; the storylines can really flow and develop between the players and the gamemaster, and the gamemaster still has the necessary authoritative guidelines to prevent the whole thing from becoming chaos.

A character earns Hero Points (***DC Heroes'*** equivalent of experience points) for running through a Subplot. Subplot storylines now take on the importance they have in comics; it becomes possible to run "The Wedding of Donna Troy" and have it be the prominent event it was.

The Last Panel

DC Heroes is my most ambitious project yet. I tried to push myself to go beyond a comfortable little design. I hope the game conveys the excitement of the DC Universe, with its legends and its new beginning. I hope you decide to be part of the legend.

Greg Gorden cut his gaming teeth on ***Diplomacy****. After losing several friends, he discovered roleplaying games allowed him to game* ***and*** *keep his friends. Greg began designing games in college, where he designed two games for college credit. He became a playtester for SPI in 1981, working primarily with* ***DragonQuest*** *products which never saw the ink of a print run. When Victory Games formed in 1982, he started work as a Systems Developer for* ***James Bond 007****. He has written the* ***Q Manual*** *for* ***007, Monsters of Myth and Legend*** *for Mayfair Games, and establishments for Blade's* ***Citybook*** *series. As soon as he regains the sleep lost on* ***DC Heroes****, Greg will find he still enjoys running, gaming conventions, his wife, and escapist movies, not necessarily in that order.* □

DC HEROES ROLE PLAYING GAME

Featured Review

by Allen Varney

It's finally here.

DC Heroes is pretty good, overall. As for the subject matter — I've been looking high and low for players who read DC comics, or who want to play the DC superheroes. Not many are interested; they're all Marvel readers, *X-Men* or *Spider-Man* fans. Still, Mayfair's *DC Heroes* system rises above its subject, and there are several technical innovations in the game that bear examination.

It's *Heavy!*

There's an amazing amount of material in *DC Heroes*. Four big books of rules, powers and skills, background material, and adventures, plus a 16-page introductory folder — two pounds of text, and we haven't reached the bottom of the box yet. There are 30 full-color character cards, much like those in TSR's *Marvel Super Heroes*, and 39 stand-up cardboard counters, and plastic bases to hold them, and two inked ten-sided dice, and a reference screen — a glossy, colorful, sturdy, *useful* reference screen that other companies would charge (and get) five bucks for. All in a *bulging* box for seventeen bucks.

The component value is unequalled within the hobby. The rumor on the industry grapevine is that Mayfair is taking a much lower "markup" than is customary — that is, the company is charging less than necessary to make a decent profit — in order to popularize *DC Heroes* and build the supplement market. An audacious move, but who can complain?

The System

Greg Gorden's design notes (above) nicely describe the game's salient features. To my mind the most intriguing of these are the Attribute Points (APs), the rigorous "logarithmic" approach, and the Action and Result Tables. These are all respectable ideas, and they're worth examining in detail.

Attribute Points. As Gorden notes, APs describe everything — which is to say, *everything* — in *DC Heroes*. Attributes, weight, distance, time, volume, information, speed — the works. Much is gained by this dedicated application: Effects of a character's abilities are instantly evident, as when a Strength of 25 APs can lift 25 APs of weight, or throw 20 APs of weight (25 − 20 =) 5 APs of distance. If you run at 4 APs of speed for 2 APs of time, you go (4 + 2 =) 6 APs of distance. Ten APs of the Starbolt power have a range of 10 APs of distance. And so on.

This idea rises or falls according to the values set for each AP. *DC Heroes*' choice of values for "zero APs" (four seconds, 50 pounds, ten feet) are intelligent; building from these usually produces sensible results, within the superheroic context of the system. However, like some other superhero games, *DC Heroes* propounds crazy unrealities at the low-powered, "normal" end of its titanic scale. For instance, it says here that a normal person with 2 APs of strength can throw a 50-pound (0 AP) sack of grain 2 APs of distance — 40 feet. Also, normal people can dig a cubic foot of earth every four seconds.

As AP relationships rise to superhero levels, characters' abilities become more plausible — if that's the word for people who can toss around apartment buildings like lacrosse balls. But I suspect that diverse attributes like speed, weight, and volume simply cannot be quantified so that they increase at the same rate. If this is true, any "attribute point" scale will always include some "range" of unreality. Fortunately, *DC Heroes* is faithful to its comic-book subject, and makes reality a low priority.

I'd say APs are a good idea for this game, but are not likely to prove widely adaptable to other roleplaying genres. Just as well, I suppose — it's hard thinking of a day as 15 APs, and Gorden's statement that *War and Peace* is 12 APs of information robs Tolstoy of much grandeur.

The logarithmic approach. Gorden's arguments for this device in *DC Heroes* are impeccable, and not unprecedented. Recall that the Hero System, too, defines its attributes logarithmically; for example, each five points of Strength represents a doubling. (Steve Peterson of Hero Games has pointed out that multiplying *DC Heroes* strengths by 5 produces almost exact *Champions* equivalents.)

But in conjunction with APs, *DC Heroes* has to make *everything* increase at the same precipitous rate. And believe me, it gets cumbersome. Each AP is actually a range of values, and the range doubles with each added AP. For instance, 5 APs of distance is 151-300 feet, but a sixth AP covers a range from 301 to 600 feet — it's twice as large. Jupiter and Saturn have orbits about 400 million miles apart, on the average; when they're the *same* distance from the Sun in game terms — 39 APs — measurement is no longer serving a purpose.

Even restricting matters to Earthbound super-types, the logarithmic scale spoils several important game mechanics. "Hero Points" let you temporarily increase the "Acting and Effect Values" of your attributes, up to double their listed values; most heroes have plenty of points to spend. This is a fair idea, representing the last-ditch desperation moves and incredible lucky breaks of so many comic-book stories. If spending points let you briefly double or even quadruple an attribute's effect, I wouldn't complain.

But on *DC Heroes'* logarithmic scale, as you've probably gathered, doubling an AP value can produce huge multiples in effect. The Batman's Strength of 5 APs is sufficient to lift half a ton — but if he spends 10 points (out of his 150) to raise the Acting and Effect Values of that Strength to 10, and then "pushes" it, we have Batman lifting DC-9 airplanes (25 tons). Sure, he can only do it for four seconds — but so much for verisimilitude.

For heroes on a budget, "pushing" an attribute or power can have much the same effect as spending points. There's no cost or penalty for pushing (unless you fail), but it is restricted to non-attack actions. Basically, if you can roll 11 or more on 2D10, you get extra APs for the action you push. The more powerful you are to begin with, the more APs you'll get — and remember that each AP is a doubling! With an 11+ roll, the Flash (R.I.P.) can increase his 28 APs of Superspeed by at least 7 APs — a 125-fold improvement. A 15+ roll bestows 11 APs, a 2000-fold increase. But if the Flash rolls *less* than 11, his Superspeed burns out and he must resort to the vague Recovery rules to get it back. The Flash will probably attempt to prevent such disaster by — yes — spending Hero Points . . .

Did You Know . . .?

According to *DC Heroes:*

- The Joker is stronger than Batman (STR 6 and 5 APs, respectively).
- The Flash (Superspeed 28 APs) can run 28 APs, or 473,485 miles, in four seconds. However, if he's carrying someone, this distance is halved; it's quartered if he's running underwater.
- Gorilla Grodd (STR 38) can throw a loaded train (3800 tons or 18 APs of weight) a distance of 38 − 18 = 20 APs, or 1,894 miles.
- Through suitable expenditure of Hero Points, Braniac (Gadgetry 20 APs) can build an Apple II home computer (INT 1, BODY 1, 4 charges), complete with disk drives and peripherals, in four seconds.
- Raven of the Teen Titans can teleport from Earth to the Moon (27 APs) without strain.
- Wonder Woman (STR 45) can lift Mount Everest (weight 43 APs) and throw it 2 APs, or 40 feet. She can run 22 APs in one four-second turn, which is from New York to San Francisco and back. In high heels, yet!
- Under ordinary circumstances Superman (Flight 45 APs) would take two years (24 APs) to fly the length of the galaxy (69 APs). However, if he spends 50 of his 210 Hero Points, he cuts the time down to four seconds.
- A normal person's Intelligence is 2 APs. Everyone in *DC Heroes*, including 12-year-old Jason Todd (the new Robin), has at least 5 or 6 APs of INT. Batman has 12; Aquaman has 13 (fish is brain food, evidently); Superman also has 13; Lex Luthor has 14; Braniac has 26.
- The Elongated Man can easily stretch eight miles (13 APs). He can push that to 60 miles (16 APs) without much trouble.
- Superman is *not* the most powerful character in *DC Heroes*. The Teen Titans' nemesis Trigon, a magical villain, can mop up the Man of Steel handily, since Superman's attributes all drop to 4 against magic. Trigon's Control (80 APs) and Teleport (60 APs) are by far the highest values of any sort in the game.
- Superman has a "Recall" power of 30 APs. He can memorize 30 APs, or 4 million books, of information. But as soon as he goes to sleep he'll forget it all.
- Nightwing (the former Robin) is a millionaire. Lex Luthor is a billionaire. The character creation system in *DC Heroes* gives an income of "Affluent" for free; if you're just "Comfortable" or even (God forbid) "Struggling," you get extra Hero Points in compensation. Who says being a hero doesn't pay?

The reasoning behind the logarithmic approach is sound, but the useful range of values is limited, and the idiosyncrasies of *DC Heroes*' pushing rules and Hero Points lead to a ludicrous escalation of power. Even superhero comics operate according to their own internal logic, and this concept does violence to that logic.

The Tables

DC Heroes is quite a single-minded game. Everything is in APs, everything increases geometrically, and *everything* you try in *DC Heroes* that isn't automatically successful is resolved with one die roll on the Action Table; all results are interpreted on the Result Table.

Because of some clever rules involving "column shifts" and rolling doubles, the tables are pretty flexible in their results. Many combat maneuvers are subsumed in column shifts, as are difficulty, range, and other modifiers. The dual-table system gives a little more breadth than other universal-table RPGs. This is the best of that type I've seen.

But in considering *DC Heroes* I've been thinking about *all* these universal table games — *James Bond 007* (which Gorden worked on), *Marvel Super Heroes, Indiana Jones,* the Pacesetter RPGs, *Doctor Who*. The concept is popular and has its strengths, but I'm coming to believe that in the long run it's a waste of time. My reasoning (so far) is this:

1. *You always need that table.* Many RPGs can be played by experienced players with nothing on hand but character sheets and dice. Granted, chart-heavy systems cannot be played "impromptu" — but this is a weakness in them. Likewise, a single-chart system is just as dependent on its rulebook as one with scads of tables. You can't do anything without the "universal" table.

Mayfair should have printed a copy of *DC Heroes*' Action and Result Tables on the back cover of *each* book in the box, and in every open space it could find, because you really need those tables. Even after you've been playing for months, you'll still be rooting around for photocopies of that introductory folder.

2. *The game requires as many rules as other RPGs.* It's ironic, but true: Though mastering "universal" tables allows you mastery of their systems, you've got to learn a lot of fiddly little rules to master them. Warren Spector discussed this in his review of the Pacesetter line last issue (#75), and it holds true for *DC Heroes* and all the rest. Knowing how many column shifts to make, and under what conditions, calls for just as much rote memorization as would a non-chart game.

In *DC Heroes,* the tables require "Acting" and "Effect" values to be compared to "Opposing" and "Resistance" values. Each power, skill, and action requires a different choice for each value. Keeping them all straight is a superhero's task.

3. *The table's results must often be interpreted.* All of these "universal" tables seem to be designed with combat in mind; results of all other actions are reduced to "high success," "low success," and other generalities. As Warren pointed out in his Pacesetter review, such vagueness requires many *little* tables to interpret the "universal" table result — or, in the absence of such support, the game relies to an unacceptable degree on gamemaster creativity.

Here, in fairness, *DC Heroes* suffers less than its peers in the one-chart field. This is partly because of clear definitions of the effect of each power or skill's success, but mostly it's due to the rigorously-applied AP measurement system. The Result Table gives the RAPs (Result APs) of any action; since whatever you're trying to do in the game is almost certain to involve APs in some context, the results are easier to apply. They seldom require interpretation. Of course, then we get back to the problems with APs . . .

There are aesthetic attractions in the idea of a one-chart game — but there are drawbacks too, even in aesthetics. My impression is that they abstract most undertakings to the point of blandness, though I'm not prepared to support that impression yet. Opinions?

Enough theory. *DC Heroes* makes intelligent use of its two-tables-in-one system. Gorden's design notes, both here and in the game, show that he gave careful thought to its workings. A subtle but interesting feature is the system's reliance on ten-sided dice — not for percentile rolls, but for bell-curve addition of the numbers rolled. The system thereby creates a large range of values while keeping the strengths of the probability curve, and leavens my philosophical dislike of polyhedral dice.

However, once more the logarithmic APs cause trouble. When heroes and their antagonists spend Hero Points, those "Effect" and "Resistance" columns on the tables shift right and down, and Result APs escalate accordingly. The blow that Batman aims at the Joker will hit for 1 AP under ordinary circumstances — but if they both spend Hero Points (in equal amounts, mind you), the points do not "cancel out" but instead increase the damage to as much as 4 APs. Any commitment of Hero Points "ups the stakes" of a maneuver quite a bit.

At higher power levels, because of the way the tables are set up, the AP increase is smaller — but since each AP is a doubling, the proportionate effect is much greater. It will take some experience to adjust to the dizzying increases possible with *DC Heroes.*

Moving Right Along

There are numerous notable points in *DC Heroes*. The character creation system, while not the humorless joke it is in *Marvel Super Heroes*, is pretty much a waste. All powers are purchased according to the same cost schedule, as are all skills. Attributes are bought on a couple of different scales. Any kind of power limitation gives the same number of extra Hero Points to spend elsewhere in the creation process. There are no power advantages. Vulnerabilities, such as Superman's susceptibility to kryptonite, are well-handled, as are character motivations; but in general players used to the complexity of *Champions* will not be satisfied here.

However, the system does create heroes as bland and boring as any in the DC comics — so it's probably appropriate for the game.

One interesting feature of the character creation process is called "the Batman option." It's basically a way of purchasing and improving skills cheaply, while increasing the cost of powers. This is a functional (if arbitrary) means for balancing ultra-skilled "normal" heroes against their superhuman counterparts. In some other games, such as *Champions*, skills are overpriced, so that Batman requires as many points to build as a hero with an energy blast that could knock out Boulder Dam. "The Batman option" could probably be constructively adapted to other super RPGs.

Combat uses shifts on the Action and Result Tables to produce a nice variety of maneuvers, including sweep attacks, trick shots, grappling, team attacks, and pulling punches. Knockback rules are simple, useful, and (as desired) unrealistic, just like in the comics.

DC Heroes' combat system makes a peculiar distinction between "Bashing" and "Killing" combat. They're identical — except that Bashing is defined so that characters will never die in it. That's the only difference, a real brute-force approach in game design: No matter what you do to your victim, it *never* reduces him or her to death unless you've announced you're entering "Killing combat." In such a case, you can kill someone — but you automatically lose any Hero Points you would have gained in that adventure.

The advice on gamemastering is excellent, with lots of concrete procedures for balancing scenarios, creating quick (if formulized) adventures, and running Subplots. This last section is a terrific addition to *any* roleplaying game: It nicely quantifies and details the ramifications of non-combat developments in characters' lives.

To expand on Gorden's enticing description in his design notes, the GM may describe a Subplot to a player in terms of its type (secret past, family, job, etc.), its severity of consequence (usually personal, sometimes larger), its tone (serious, humorous, melodramatic), and its degree (length). These terms also determine how many Hero Points a character receives for participating in the Subplot, much as they're determined for conventional scenarios.

The instructions on developing Subplot stories, fading in and out, and "pulling the plug" on unpleasant or unworkable Subplots are all well taken. The system can be incorporated into any campaign. Go for it.

Gadget rules are unnecessarily limiting and confusing. Characters with Gadgetry skill may expend Hero Points to build anything they want, defining gadgets by selected attributes and powers. But *DC Heroes* places great emphasis on any gadget's "charges" (number of uses) and its "duration" (how long until it's useless). These tend to make gadgetry an expensive, long-term undertaking.

Unlike most everything in the game, this just isn't true to the comics. Gorden writes in *DC Heroes* that if gadgets were easily obtainable, they'd be cheap substitutes for powers. Maybe so — but how often does the Batmobile run out of gas or go into the shop? How many times have you seen Green Arrow hunched over a workbench for a week, fine-tuning his new arrow gadget? As they stand, gadgets are so forbidding that no sensible crimefighter will place much stock in them — which hardly seems appropriate.

Powers and skills are an odd lot. The rumor is that an early draft of *DC Heroes* was in fact intended to be TSR's *Marvel Super Heroes* game — and several powers here seem suitable only for specific Marvel characters ("Flame Being allows the character to create and cover himself with a sheet of fire"). There are many powers, including a bunch of oddities you won't find in most superhero games: Two-Dimensional, Voodoo, Cell Rot, Omni-Arm (transforms the shape of your limbs), Eye of the Cat ("allows the user to see through the eyes of any mammal"), Locate Animal, Comprehend Languages, and one that lets you shoot streams of acid from your fingertips. Pretty baroque.

If the abstraction of *Champions* turns you off — if you don't want acid streams and starbolts and lightning and gusts of wind all swallowed into "Energy Blast" — you'll probably like this list of powers. Personally, I'd rather see (for instance) "Flame Animation" and "Ice Animation" and "Water Animation" subsumed in one power, and let the player decide what to Animate. Likewise all these other redundant powers. Still, congratulations on a large and distinctly varied selection. Some power descriptions are vague and incomplete, but the holes can usually be plugged easily during play.

Support Material

The Teen Titans adventure included with *DC Heroes*, "A Titan, Nevermore," is an excellent group adventure involving the rescue of Kid Flash from a strange assortment of villains. It's certainly not trivial — which is more than can be said for the 16-page pullout map of Teen Titan headquarters, described in tedious detail level by level. I lost interest around Level Two (of ten, plus five basement floors). The map has nothing to do with anything in the adventure, in case you were wondering.

The same excessive attention to detail marks the 16 pages of deadly dull descriptions of Metropolis, Gotham City, and other imaginary DC cities, all laid out neighborhood by neighborhood. (The Vegan planetary system is described world by world.) Who cares? Cities (or planets) in comic books work pretty much the way they do in (say) *TOON*, where whatever you want is right up the street or just Outside of Town. Why should *DC Heroes* codify a perfectly serviceable free-form concept? I would have preferred those 16 pages to be another adventure.

And speaking of unnecessary additions, what are the cardboard figures for? You don't move them on a map — not with logarithmic movement rates! You just stand them up by the rulebooks and think about what Mayfair could have included instead. But this game is still an amazing value, even discounting superfluities.

Last and Least

One more thing about that adventure. The plot is above average, but the actual graphic layout is — to be polite — not to professional standards. Columns of text are chopped up and scattered about the page, art is shoved in where it will (or won't) fit, sometimes you can't even tell where the column you're reading continues.

And unfortunately one must generalize that observation — not in terms of graphics, but of simple copy-editing and proofreading. *DC Heroes* is blighted, to a literally unbelievable degree, with misspellings, bad punctuation, and dismal grammatical errors that you wouldn't find in a high school freshman term paper. Abysmal. A second printing has corrected many typos, I'm told.

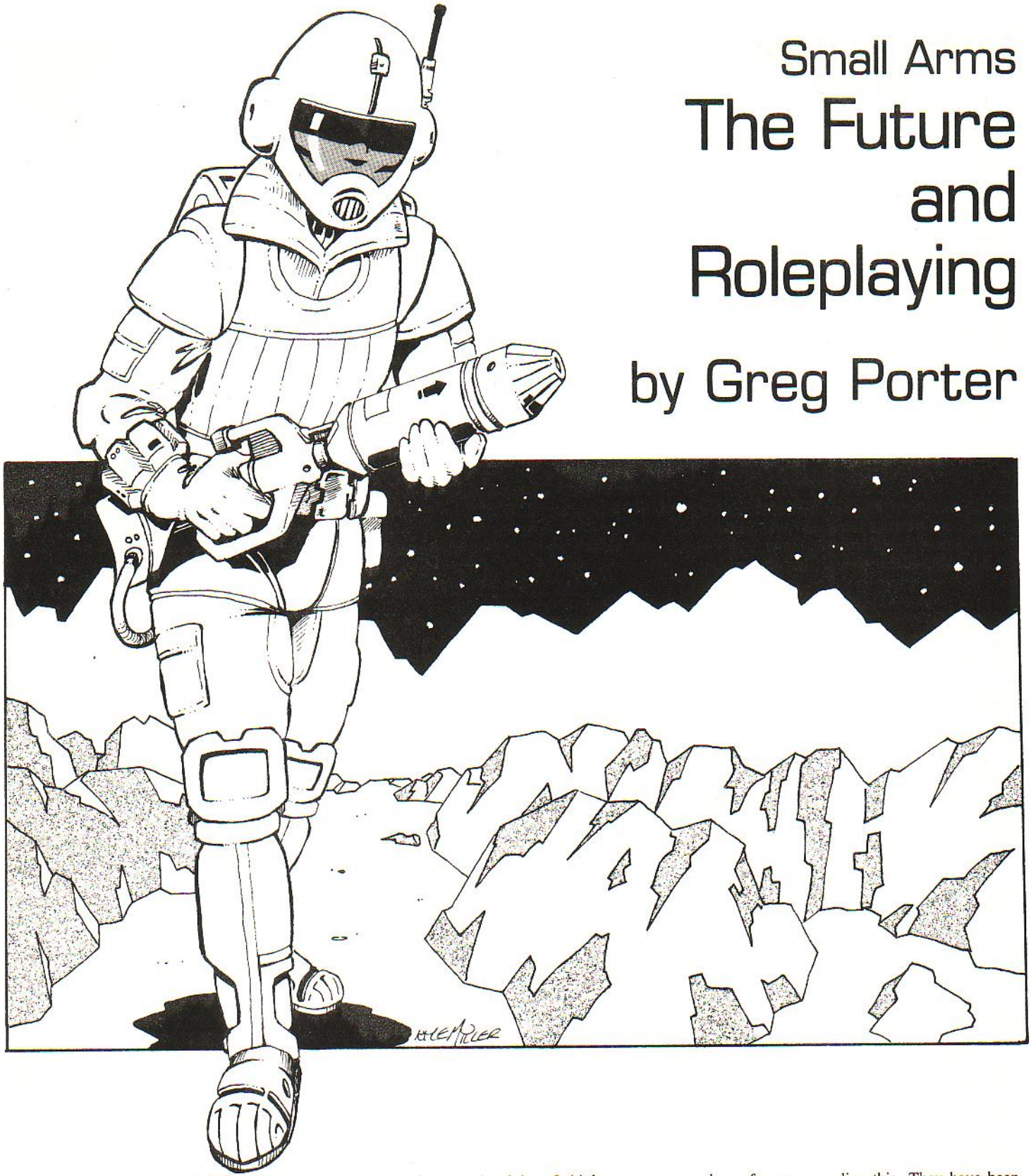
But at least the game survives its editing, and it turns out to be an innovative, thoughtful, respectable superhero RPG. Occasionally it's simplistic, but always by design. It is not realistic, but it closely simulates the unreality of the comics. This is a good game for superhero fans who are put off by the intricacy of *Champions*, the clumsiness of *Villains and Vigilantes*, and the juvenility of *Marvel Super Heroes*. I look forward to the deluge of modules and support material Mayfair plans.

Interesting that Marvel Comics, with its relatively more sophisticated heroes and stories, spawned a simple introductory RPG — while DC Comics, noted among comics readers for banal childishness, has inspired a very considerable game. Oh, for a conversion system!

DC HEROES (Mayfair Games); $17. Designed by Greg Gorden, assisted by Sam Lewis; development by Brian Reid. Superhero RPG. 16-page 8½" x 11" introductory folder, 40-page Player's Manual, 96-page Gamemaster's Manual, 40-page Powers & Skills booklet, 32-page adventure booklet, 30 color character cards, 11" x 25½" color referee's screen, 39 color counters and plastic bases, two inked ten-sided dice, ziplock counter bag, boxed. For referee and one or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985. □

Small Arms
The Future and Roleplaying

by Greg Porter



Among those who play RPGs set in the future, such as ***Space Opera*** and ***Traveller***, there is usually heated debate on the effectiveness of various types of weapons: Is a laser better than a blaster; what are the advantages and disadvantages of fusion rifles, etc. Given the level of technology now (7-8 on the ***Traveller*** scale), and foreseeable developments, it is possible to make estimates of what weapons will be used in the future, and when they will arrive. I have to disagree with the ***Traveller*** scale as to certain developments, but this is a matter of personal opinion. I think we are at TL (Tech Level) 8 right now as far as man-portable weapons go, but I don't see TL9 in this area for at least 100 years, and TL 10 for another 50-100 after that. I would gladly be wrong, though.

Chemically Propelled Projectile Weapons

Sad to say (for weapon buffs), these will probably remain standard issue during the lifetime of anyone reading this. They have been around for 700 years now, and we should expect them to linger for another hundred or so.

Of course there will be improvements. The current one that is catching on is the bullpup design. The design takes the stock, which is usually just wasted space, and fills it with the parts that were normally in front of the trigger, such as the receiver and magazine. The end result is a shorter, lighter, and easier to manage weapon. The best current example is the Steyr AUG (*A*rmy *U*niversal *G*un). It also

has a 1.5x scope, built into the carrying handle, with rudimentary sights should the scope break.

Another change we are likely to see is plastic in many areas of the weapon. The entire stock, hammer, and trigger assembly of the AUG is made of plastic, as are the magazines. This isn't cheap plastic — lifetime of the parts approaches that of their metal counterparts.

The next step will be caseless ammunition. There will be no brass casing, and the only metal part will be the bullet itself. The entire assembly, except for the bullet, will be consumed on firing. This has several advantages: weight savings; a smaller bullet; and the consumption of the cartridge eliminates the need for an ejection port, a possible entry point for dirt, chemicals, and other contaminants. This makes the weapon more resistant to adverse conditions.

Weapons of this type are under development now. The H&K G11 project typifies what we can expect to see: 50-round clips (compared to 30 rounds for most present rifles), integral telescopic sight, lots of plastic, and three-round auto-burst ability. It is also virtually tamperproof and maintenance-free. If this becomes an accepted battle rifle, it will probably be designed and used by a small West European country. Smaller countries will find it easier to dispose of their arsenals than countries like the US. The US has recently accepted a new version of the M-16. These, and the billions of rounds of ammo stockpiled, will probably be used at least until 2010. Caseless cartridges may see use in other areas as soon as the early 1990s.

The caseless cartridge probably represents the final step in the evolution of this weapon, and will probably see use until at least the year 2100, possibly longer. Final steps may include total replacement of metal parts with synthetics, built-in vision enhancement, electronic targeting, and increased projectile velocity, giving a lethality of perhaps 1.5 times that of present weapons.

Other advancements in hand-held weaponry will be in the field of shotguns. For many years, infantry combat has been a matter of area fire, the quantity of bullets fired being more important than the accuracy of each bullet. Shotguns are making a comeback for this reason. An automatic shotgun can pump out a lot more shot or flechettes than an automatic rifle, so the probability of inflicting a casualty is increased. Modern flechettes have a range well over 100m and are quite suitable for combat use. While every soldier might not be armed with one, each squad might have a shotgun man, much as one man now might be designated to fire on full auto, while the rest concentrate on "aimed" fire. These shotguns do not look at all like most people picture shotguns. The ammunition will probably not be compatible with civilian weapons, and designs must take into account the need for a large clip of these oversize shells.

In the future, the average infantryman may have a better anti-armor and anti-aircraft ability. Current 7.62 (NATO) AP rounds are advertised as penetrating 15mm of armor plate. Hyper-velocity tungsten rounds will exceed this in the future, and there are rumors that depleted-uranium bullets for normal rifles are in production. Current AA and AT weapons are still large, with a low rate of fire. As shaped-charge and propellant technology gets better, these weapons can be expected to get smaller, and microchip technology will make them smarter. Higher rate of fire will also come. License is being offered now for the ARPAD 600 Close Support Weapon (CSW), a shoulder-fired low-velocity 35mm cannon.

As armor gets better, there will still be a large discrepancy between what can easily be carried, and what will go through a tank. Common infantry AT weapons of the future will be more powerful than today's, but — for a while anyway — armor will keep up. AA weapons will become smaller, with less preparation time, better range, and improved tracking. Of course, planes and helicopters will be harder to hit and kill. Things may eventually reach a point where a soldier can carry a grenade launcher-type device around with different loads for anti-personnel, anti-armor, and anti-aircraft use.

As the ultimate in hand-launched weapons, we now have the technology to get small nuclear explosions with as little as 50 grams of fission material. If we wanted to, in a few years we could have nuclear bazookas, with yields from .1 kilotons up to a kiloton or so. This is truly a battlefield nuclear weapon. The question is: Who are you going to trust one with?

Civilian developments will be a little different. Until caseless ammo has been in use for several years, there will probably be no essential change in the form or function of modern pistols. There will be the little expensive technological developments that are too fragile or expensive for the average soldier, such as laser sights. The one you saw in *Terminator* was real. It costs a few thousand dollars, but you can have it custom-made.

Another weapon that might be developed is the hyper velocity spheroid (HVS). Spherical projectiles lose velocity very rapidly. Witness a modern grenade: The fragments have an initial velocity of 10 m/sec, but have little or no chance of injuring someone at a range of 20m or greater. Imagine a gun designed to fire these tiny projectiles. They would be lethal or incapacitating at short range, but relatively harmless further out. This might work well in crowded areas, for home or other short-range defense, or in areas where a small but effective weapon was needed. The spherical projectiles would only be a millimeter or two in diameter, but the shock cavity produced would far exceed the tissue damage done by the bullet itself. Other improvements to pistols include armor-piercing rounds and exploding or fragmenting rounds, all of which are available now, if you know where to look.

Lasers

While I don't think soldiers will be toting around personal energy weapons for a century or so, laser weapon systems may be in use within 10 years. This will probably be for air defense on-board nuclear-powered carriers. Here, neither weight nor power is a factor. To my knowledge, the US has done no shipboard testing, but certain Russian vessels have been tested as possible energy weapon platforms. Such systems would probably mount the laser below decks, using a mirror to aim the beam.

Eventually the lasers will become ground mobile, but probably remain in an AA role. The actual type of laser will probably be the "free electron" laser. I won't get into technical details, but it is a prime candidate because it can be "tuned" to get a specific output frequency or "color." This allows selection of a frequency that is optimal for atmospheric conditions and/or the type of target.

The first man-portable lasers will probably be bulky, perhaps with backpack or belt-mounted ancillaries. This isn't too practical, so they will be relegated to special units, perhaps snipers. The power supply will probably be advanced lithium batteries, with the battery weight per shot being roughly that of a bullet (10-20 grams). The battery pack will probably be good for 20-50 shots. As technology advances, the weapon will get smaller, perhaps the size of a modern light machine gun, with a replaceable battery clip. Given that a laser rifle would probably not replace a cartridge weapon unless it was more effective, the laser battle rifle will initially be at least 1.5 times as effective as its predecessor.

Past this point, things get fuzzy. Free electron lasers are the best we have now, but miniaturizing them to pistol size may have to wait another 50-100 years (a Tech Level) past the point where the rifles are first used, and that may be as late as 2150.

Lasers have the advantage that they are LOS (line of sight) weapons. There is no bullet drop, so where you aim is where you hit. When the "projectile" is moving at the speed of light, movement of the target is of little consequence.

The disadvantages of lasers are many. As they will have a bit of microelectronics built in, they will be subject to disruption by EMP (electromagnetic pulses) unless sufficiently shielded; this adds weight and cost. Lasers are particularly ineffective versus particulate clouds, like smoke or dust. High-power pulsed lasers can burn a hole through this, but infantry weapons will have neither the power nor rate of fire to do so. On a high-tech battlefield, the average soldier may have vision enhancement to see an IR, visible, or UV laser, pinpointing it to its source more accurately than his ears could pinpoint a normal rifle. This is not good if you are the source.

Particle Beams

Particle beam technology is even bulkier than laser technology, so barring a major breakthrough, don't expect to see man-portable particle beam weapons for *at least* 100 years after lasers make their debut. Think about it: Particle beams are produced by high-energy accelerators. These are LARGE. The efficiency is also low. On top of that, the high-energy particles may produce "soft" X-rays all along the beam path, through interaction

with the atmosphere. *All* along the beam path, including at the firing point! Aside from irradiating the firer, the atmosphere also reduces the effect of the beam. I don't expect to see particle beams as infantry weapons for a long time, if ever. In space and on vehicles, maybe.

Fusion Guns and Plasma Beams

As infantry weapons, these are very expensive, highly complex ways to commit suicide. Apart from carrying a fusion reactor around on your back, creating a superhot plasma right in front of you has disadvantages of its own. The biggest problems are the back blast of X-rays and the explosion caused by thermal expansion of the plasma. This is roughly equivalent to several hundred sticks of TNT, depending on initial plasma energy. If you can handle this *and* get your opponent to effective range, you are in good shape, as everything that happens to you will happen to him.

If you can avoid an atmosphere or other intervening matter, a weapon of this type can actually be useful. Magnetic shielding is the best defense against this sort of attack, and would become very common if these things came out, although you would need a fusion reactor to power one. I don't foresee it for individuals for a long, long time.

Mass Drivers, Gauss Rifles, and Railguns

These are all in the same class, that of magnetically propelled projectiles. These are my personal favorites to replace conventional weaponry starting around, say, 2100. We are working on them right now, but the problem of scaling them down to man-portable is what holds them back. We could have a railgun-based orbital ABM system by the year 2000, and the Army is funding a project right now to put one in a 155mm self-propelled howitzer chassis. The advantage of the railgun is the incredible velocity that can be obtained. Projectile velocities approaching 10 kilometers per second have been obtained in a vacuum, and this would be up to probably 50 kilometers per second by the time an orbital system was ready. The limiting velocity in air is roughly 4.5 kilometers per second.

Given identical projectiles, the velocity difference alone would double the lethality of today's weapons. Vehicle-mounted weapons will better this.

The power supply for a portable railgun would probably be lithium batteries, with a capacitor storage bank for the firing pulses. Initially these might be belt-mounted, but as efficiencies got better, battery clips would probably be used. Larger weapons might use the homopole generator, a means of converting angular momentum into large power pulses.

Where Is It All Going?

Looking at current developments on the vehicle front, it is a race between weapons and armor. Which technology will level off first? Will armor slow down while weapons get better, or vice versa? The level we have now is neck-and-neck, the front of tanks able to stop about anything, at the expense of all the other facings. This leads to weapons being designed to take on these weaker facings, while the armor people try to make the armor lighter, stronger, or both, so they can put more on.

Back on the home front, we have already-lethal infantry weapons becoming even nastier. Torso armor that reliably stops rifle bullets is too cumbersome and expensive for the average soldier. Current body armor for soldiers is best suited to stopping low-velocity bullets, such as pistol or submachine gun fire, shrapnel, or long-range rifle fire. For special situations and missions, there will be heavy armor that will stop most small arms.

The next step from here is powered armor. Powered armor is a nice concept, but the added protection a man might receive is more than offset by his enhanced value as a target, and the training time needed to use the equipment will probably not be worth the return in a large-scale military operation. As before, there will be circumstances where it has its uses, so it will come along eventually. If things come to that level, we can expect an automated battlefield, people acting from positions of relative safety, while machines do the work.

How to Use This Information

The weapons dealt with in this article fall into an awkward range. They are too far forward for present games, and antiques in most science fiction RPGs. Using the ***Traveller*** Tech Level scale, the guns are TL8+, the lasers and gauss rifles TL9+, and the particle beams TL10+. This is slightly at odds with their listings — but we don't seem to be on the verge of grav technology or jump drives either.

It is not likely that characters will be able to afford ships or lots of space travel until a few TLs after it becomes possible; the military or government will get it first, then mega-corps, then smaller corporations and individuals. Depending on your campaign, this point could coincide with the introduction of these weapons. If the characters are from this period, they may want to get hold of the "latest" weaponry, and this could be it.

Most campaigns are set at a higher level, with most areas a few TLs off the peak. Lower-tech planets may have these earlier versions of weapons for several reasons. The local government may have the ability to construct simpler, less efficient versions of modern weapons. This would be a combination of local talent and imported technology, much as self-trained gunsmiths in the Phillipines and Southeast Asia can make Thompson SMG copies out of plumbing and sheet metal. Contemporary examples of weapon copying abound. The Russians copy our equipment (or try to), the Chinese copy the Russians, and the Vietnamese copy the Chinese. It's not quite this simple, but you get the idea.

Another way for areas to get these weapons is as surplus. Equipping a large army with new weapons is hideously expensive. This is partially recouped by selling the old ones as surplus. A "third world" planet could take advantage of this to get higher-tech weapons without the development and manufacturing costs. Perhaps they could eventually sell them to someone else. There are still air forces on Earth that use WWII planes as front-line equipment.

The last way to introduce these weapons into your campaign, and perhaps the least common, is to put them on *very* low TL worlds. They could perhaps be relics from a less fortunate expedition, or imported by certain unscrupulous individuals to give a certain faction an edge. Bodyguards of the local high muckety-muck might carry them as symbols of power, or the old technology could be part of a new religion.

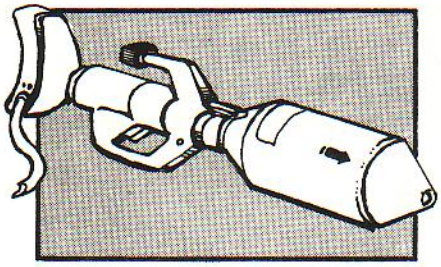
These hand-me-down or homebuilt weapons cannot be expected to have all the niceties of the current-issue weapons. Things like vision enhancement and gyrostabilization will be uncommon or nonexistent, and the weapons will be no-frills all the way. If the weapon can work without a given part, it probably won't have it.

Stats

I feel the ***Striker*** and ***Mercenary*** (***Traveller*** Book 4) systems are the best ones currently available for portraying these weapons. Given these stats, you should be able to convert them to any others you might need. ***Striker/Mercenary*** stats for the weapons postulated are in the box at left.

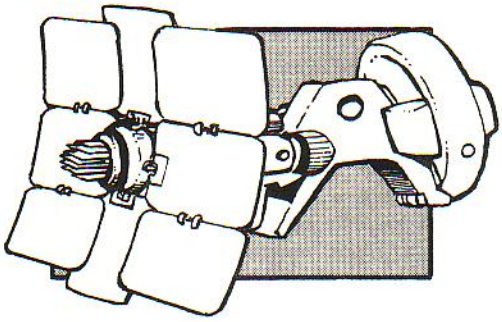
TL	*Weapon*	*Shots*	*Effective*	*Long*	*Extreme*	*Targets*	*Dex Mods*
9	Laser rifle	40	15(5)	30(4)	100(1)	1	6(−3)10(+2)
10	Particle beam	20	10(7)	30(6)	100(4)	1	7(−2)9(+1)
8	HVSP	10	C(3)	.5(1)	1(0)	1	7(−2)9(+1)
8	Shotgun*	20	5(2)+4	10(1)+2	20(0)+0	½	4(−1)9(+1)
	Shotgun**		5(4)+2	10(3)+1	20(2)+0		
8	5mmACR	50	20(4)+2	40(3)+1	60(1)+0	½	5(−1)8(+2)
9	Gauss rifle	20	20(5)	50(4)	100(2)	1	7(−2)10(+2)
8	ARPAD 600***	1	15(18)	30(18)	60(18)	1	7(−2)10(+1)

*single shot
**autofire
***penetration give is for HEAP rounds



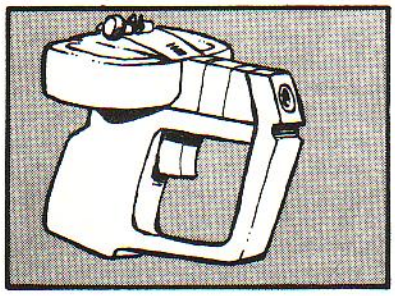
MKI Laser Rifle: First-issue laser weapon, it fires an intense pulse of laser energy, tunable over the IR to UV range. It has integral telescopic sights with light amplification, and can fire up to 40 shots before the power pack requires recharging or replacement.

Length: 900mm. Weight of weapon: 7kg. Weight of power pack: 3kg. Base price: Cr3000; cost for new power pack: Cr100. Recharge takes four hours connected to portable generator.



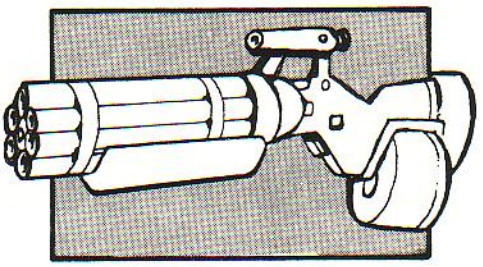
MKI Particle Beam: First-issue particle beam weapon, it consists of an over-the-shoulder firing group, designed to be fired from a prone or covered position. The folding blast shield is designed to protect the user from backwash and radiation side effects caused by firing. Any unshielded party within 1m of the beam takes an attack with a penetration of −2. It has integral telescopic sights with thermal imaging capability, and can fire 20 shots before the power pack requires recharging or replacement.

Length: 1400mm. Weight of weapon: 9kg. Weight of power pack: 3kg. Base price: Cr3500; cost for new power pack: Cr200. Recharge takes four hours connected to portable generator.



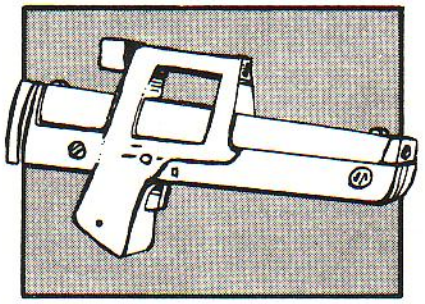
Hyper Velocity Spheroid Pistol (HVSP): Primarily used by security forces, especially on worlds where lethal weaponry must be given to less than perfectly loyal individuals. The ammunition is specialized and hard to duplicate, and the short range means that loyal forces will always have the ability to strike at a safe range.

Length: 160mm. Weight of weapon: 200gm. Clip weight: 30gm. Base price: Cr200; cost for new clip: Cr100.



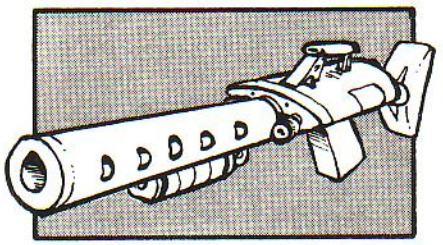
Combat Shotgun: A modernization of the shotgun design, this weapon fires either flechettes or slugs. Small shaped-charge rounds capable of penetrating light armor may also be available. A simple, easy-to-use weapon, it is available with or without integral telescopic sight.

Length: 800mm. Weight of weapon: 5kg. Clip weight: 2kg. Base price: Cr600; cost for new clip: Cr400.



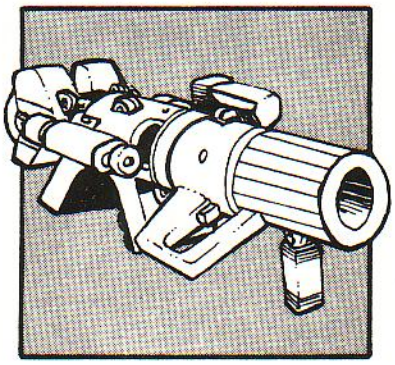
5mm ACR: The first significant change to the battle rifle in over 80 years, the 5mm ACR uses caseless ammunition and large amounts of synthetics in its construction. This gives a significant saving of weight and space, which is used to give a larger ammunition supply. It may fire bursts of 1, 3, or 10 rounds, and has an integral telescopic sight.

Length: 750mm. Weight of weapon: 3600gm. Clip weight: 350gm. Base price: Cr700; cost for new clip: Cr30.



MKI Gauss Rifle: First-issue magnetically propelled projectile weapon, it fires a 6mm iron slug with a tungsten steel core. Flight is spin-stabilized, with spin imparted by slight curvature of the launch rails. Barrel life is nearly indefinite, although the "chamber" should be replaced every few thousand rounds due to degradation of the launch rails in that area. The weapon is equipped with vision enhancement, rangefinder, and range-correcting scope for sniper duty. It can fire up to 20 shots before the power pack requires recharging or replacement.

Length: 1500mm. Weight of weapon: 8kg. Clip weight: 2kg. Base price: Cr3000; cost for new clip: Cr200. Recharge takes four hours connected to portable generator.



ARPAD 600 CSW: Development is now complete on this shoulder-fired low-velocity cannon. It fires a 35mm HE, HEAP, or ILLUM round at a velocity of roughly 600 m/sec, and is capable of penetrating 50mm of steel plate. The advantages of the weapon include low signature and the ability of the operator to carry many rounds of ammunition. It includes a telescopic sight, with mounts for optional night vision equipment.

Length: 950mm. Weight of weapon: 6800gm. Ammunition weight per shot: 170 gm. Base price: Cr1500; ammunition cost per shot: Cr50.

What High-Tech Weapons Do to RPGs

RPGs set in the future can be a lot simpler as far as combat and damage go, and characters may want to avoid them as much as possible. With improved weapon lethality, damage will probably be one of three types: Minor, Incapacitating, and Lethal. "Minor" covers things like nicks, grazes, and hand-to-hand attacks. "Incapacitating" is just that: The part of the body hit don't work no more. You can guess "Lethal."

Hit locations can be broken down into Arms, Legs, Torso, and Head. You can see how this works. A rifle slug to the chest will either be minor, like a graze, incapacitating (likely), or lethal (quite likely). Also note that without quick care, the incapacitating result is likely to become lethal. ***Traveller*** is probably the first example of a system like this. After a hiatus of a few years it is coming back into use with systems like ***James Bond 007, Twilight: 2000,*** and ***To Challenge Tomorrow.*** It is quick, simple, and fairly accurate.

When the characters start realizing that combat kills, they may avoid it more, and get more involved in roleplaying, rather than combat-playing. This might not be such a bad idea. After all, isn't roleplaying what it's all about? □

MASTERING THE GAME

Confessions of a MORROW PROJECT Gamemaster

(or, You want to do *what* with your M16?)

by Jonathan Walton

For you who have never tried (or seen) it, ***The Morrow Project*** (TimeLine Ltd.) is something a little different in the RPG market. It is a Post-Holocaust system which, if you follow the standard ***TMP*** guidelines, gives the players a true purpose; not just to survive, but to rebuild. ***The Morrow Project***'s premise is that certain men of vision foresaw a war coming and realized that, with proper preparation, rebuilding could be made much easier. To this end, they used a cryogenic freezing technique to preserve teams of well-educated and well-equipped people, to be awakened after the worst of the holocaust. Their mission: to help rebuild civilization.

Players take the characters of Morrow Project personnel. The game (in its second edition) uses the Chaosium system of skill rolls on percentile dice for most of the game mechanics. These skills increase with experience and use. In addition, the primary "campaign map" is a standard North American Road Atlas. As Project Director, you have several set-up options. The Morrow Project was set up for different types of teams: MARS (Mobile Assault, Rescue and Strike) teams, which are generally heavily armed and armored, intended for selective use of force when needed; Science teams, lightly armed but (generally) heavily armored, usually able to deal with any sort of research problem; and Recon teams, moderately armed and armored (depending on their specific mission), designed to scout conditions in large areas and report them to the Primary Base. In addition, there are "Special" teams, which are hospitals, power stations, agricultural teams, "infiltration" teams, or anything else that the PD dreams up. Recon teams seem to be the most popular for players, with MARS teams in second place. [No, Charles, you can't have the manpack laser on a Recon team!] Set-up consists of rolling up characters and setting base skills. There are certain minima for skills, depending on team type, plus bonuses on some skills for high dexterity, strength, or intelligence. [Linda, I know that your bayonet just won't fit the end of an Ingram M-10: the silencer gets in the way. Would you prefer the Uzi with long barrel instead? No, you can't just weld a bigger mount on the bayonet.]

I also give a certain number of "skill points" so that the players can individualize their characters. I use a 40/60 combat/other split. They can add a total of 40 points to their combat-related skills in whatever way they want, and a total of 60 points in the other skills. This seems to work reasonably well. I would not suggest going higher on points, as experience comes reasonably quickly.

The PD then places the team in a "bolt hole" on his campaign map. The hole contains the team's freeze tubes, vehicle(s), and minimal supplies; it is designed to be abandoned. As a suggestion, try to get a Rand McNally Road Atlas for your campaign map: TimeLine uses that atlas in its modules, and it helps a great deal to use the same map. Another major advantage of this is that neither the players nor the PD really have to map — they can save their pennies, and buy their own blank copy to draw all over. Of course, they will not have all of the points of interest that the PD has drawn in on his, like bolt holes, supply caches, bases, and bomb sites; they'll find them eventually. They are now ready to "wake up" and play.

Player Notes

As every game has two facets — playing the game and running the game — I have two sets of advice: one for players, one for Project Directors. For players, first, play your character. In my campaign, "psych tests are required of Morrow personnel," so there should be no maniacal killers running around, posing as players. I have played in campaigns in which the standard opening line was a shot from an M202A1 Flame Weapon. Needless to say, these games tend to get boring rather soon. [Did you hear that we wiped out an entire slaver's caravan last night? It was great! How many slaves did we free? Ah, well, after the White Phosphorus grenades and the machine guns finished, we did free one guy, but he died later. But we sure got rid of that bunch of slavers!]

This game offers an opportunity to be a "good guy" rather than a person who takes anything he wants at the point of a sword/gun/blaster/etc. Try it, you may find that it is a lot of fun. [Yeah, we got a bunch of slavers, too. Saw them that afternoon, circled back that night, shot their guard with a silenced pistol, knocked everyone out with a BZ gas grenade, and sorted the slavers out. Now they're wearing the chains until we turn them over to the local authorities, and one of the girls we saved has decided she likes me. It was great!]

Also consider what form of civilization your character would help rebuild. I have seen teams rebuild along totally feudal lines, totally American lines, and some totally off-the-wall lines. It all depends on your character.

Second, play *carefully*. [Yes, Linda, I realize that it was a mistake that you killed the team leader when you were actually shooting at the big wolf, but you're going to have to convince the rest of the team of that, not me.] There is no Raise Dead spell in this game. If you tangle with a .50-caliber bullet, you will probably lose, and your only alternative is to start a new character.

Also, realize that you have limited supplies. The firepower that you have is great, but when the ammunition is gone, it is *gone*. (Did you know that flamethrowers are very impressive weapons, but they only have five shots? This can be a serious problem when you have more than five things to shoot.) There are no stores to run down to and pick up another case of ammunition. Reloading may be possible, but it is generally not easy. [Wasn't that great, the way I mowed down that big black fly? Fine, but that was the last of the machine-gun ammo from the turret. *You* stick *your* head out and try to convince that giant wolverine that he shouldn't chew off our tires.]

Also, as part of playing carefully, a reasonable hesitation is generally no big deal. With the Resistweave coveralls, and the vehicles, you can generally last through the first attack

of whatever may be after you. So give things the benefit of the doubt — they may turn out to be friendly.

Referee Notes

Now for advice to the PD. First, decide carefully what type of game you wish to run. In *TMP* I generally break it down into six choices:

1. A true campaign vs. isolated incidents.
2. Shortly after the Holocaust vs. long after.
3. Primary Base active vs. Primary Base inactive.
4. Other bases active vs. other bases inactive.
5. Other teams active vs. other teams inactive.
6. Random events (encounters), planned encounters, or a combination.

Using a combination of these, a PD can develop his or her own unique campaign. [Say that again? We can't get Primary on the radio, no other team responds, the only people who will talk to us use the code name "Snake Eaters," and there is a two-foot-thick oak tree blocking the entrance to the bolt hole?! Ah, do these freeze tubes recycle? No? Let's break out the trade pack whiskey, it's going to be a long day.]

Notice, though, that most campaigns will be a combination of planned and totally random encounters. I once had a player who had run into my Generic Soviet Encounter #1 ("We are collecting for the Collective, now give till it hurts, or this AK47 certainly will") spend an entire gaming session trying to find that collective, and making me improvise like mad. This is a very good game for "improvising" gamemasters.

Second, I suggest equipping the players rather well. This kind of puts me out on a limb, since most PDs prefer to have their players scrambling for supplies all the time. [What do you mean there is no 9x19 mm. ammo in the cache? Everybody on the team uses either an Uzi or an Ingram. Well, maybe we can try reloading some rounds from the shotgun shells.] But when you realize the cost of selecting, training, and then freezing one person, the thought of not spending the extra "money" on extra equipment just does not make sense. Your basic installation, the "bolt hole," which is a large concrete and steel bunker with the freeze tubes and certain minimal supplies, is designed to be abandoned. The cost of an extra M16 or grenade launcher or case of ammunition is insignificant compared to that. If you have gone through all that expense and trouble to preserve this person through the war, you are not going to want to lose this person because he ran out of bullets for his pistol!

Also, it makes much more sense to "issue resupply" primarily at the caches rather than at bases after the war. We currently have a system of interstate highways that makes that sort of overland hauling routine. Does anyone out there seriously think that it would be anywhere near as easy after a war?

I have included my standard Recon Team manifest, which shows all the extra equipment available to a Recon Team in its supply caches, and which cache they are in (my standard is six caches per team, widely scattered, figuring that at least four should survive intact). Give your players what they need to do the job that you have given them.

However, we don't have to be Father Christmas about this, either. I usually spread a team's caches out in the entire state that they are assigned to. In *TMP* terms, it can take a long time to visit each cache. Also, remember that the vehicles are not *that* big, that the players spend a lot of time in their vehicles, and that their storage space is limited. [What do you mean, there's no room to sleep in the vehicle? I'll use the hose of the flamethrower for a pillow, stretch out on the Dragon missile case, and rest my feet on the fusion pack for the laser. What do you mean, claustrophobia? I had my psych tests.]

As to campaign set-up, each PD will eventually work out his own system. I first set up the bases, bolt holes, supply caches, etc., and *then* "bomb." This will generally result in some attrition, either of equipment or of people. I keep track of all the little marks on the map with 3x5 cards, keyed to the map reference numbers, showing what is there, assigned to which team, etc. This works for me; your system should work for you. That is one of the big keys in *TMP*: there is no "official" way. There are several very good modules out, and the game system is excellent, but if you want to totally shift it around, that's fine with TimeLine.

I have included *my* Standard Recon Team Manifest. A copy of this has been sent to TimeLine, but please understand that it is *my* manifest, not theirs. If you don't like it, junk it, or change it, but don't let your players try to trap you into the line that "it must be official." I have "stolen" ideas from campaigns I have been in, and used them in mine. If an idea is good, it's good. In the after-gaming bull session, I do tell who the idea came from (common courtesy).

If my manifest, or any hints that I give in this article appeal to you, use them! If they don't fit the system you have developed, forget mine, write your own article, and tell me yours. This form of sharing is a very good source for ideas that all of us need.

Off Soapbox. Next suggestion: Let your team have some say in their set-up. They supposedly trained together; let them coordinate skills and weapon types. They should be able to decide who does what, within reason. However, as PD, don't be afraid to tell them if you see potential trouble coming. Most teams need a balance of weapons and skills to be able to survive. [No, Charles, you can't put everything on Special Weapons and carry a flamethrower and a Dragon everywhere. Why don't you try the Hall Cleaner (Atchisson Assault Shotgun) load? That should give you plenty to play with.]

Also, I do not allow all of the standard loads to Recon teams. A Stoner M23 assault carbine, Browning Hi-Power, and assortment of grenades are fine; but a sniper rifle or an Ingram M-10 and demo pack are a little off, at least for a Recon team. The M47 Dragon guided missile load is right out!

Running the Project

When the time comes for your team to face the cold, cruel world ["As the bolt hole door opens, you see a move-" "We're firing with everything we've got!" "-ment. Well, okay you now see what used to be a rabbit, you think. There isn't too much left so you can't tell for sure"], *don't* tell them what's going on, no matter what type of game you're running! They don't *know* what type of game you're running. They have just come out of a hole in the ground where they have been asleep for X many years. They don't know how long they have been there, or what outside conditions are. All they know is where the bolt hole was, if they had a special mission, and whatever else they can figure out. If they don't use the radio, don't "contact" them. If they don't use the periscope in the bolt hole, let them go out blind. It's their job to find out what is going on.

However, don't be too subtle at first. It will take players a while to get used to things. Also, the time after a nuclear war would probably be a brutal, unsubtle time. Work slowly into the hidden hints, the legends, and so on. Give them things to do immediately. "The mission" is to rebuild civilization, but that is a large chunk to swallow at one time. Give them a town to work with. Let them reestablish communications in the local area. "Bad guys" (mutants, bandits, whatever) are good for getting their blood flowing. [The guy facing you has his bow drawn, and you hear crossbows cocking behind you. What do you want to do?] Help them to keep busy, and with a sense of purpose. If you are running a late campaign, suggest that they find out what happened to the rest of the Morrow Project. As they do this, they will find that they are fulfilling their mission: rebuilding civilization.

I am through. *The Morrow Project*, as I said, is something a little different on the RPG market. Enjoy yourselves, and may you have a full belt in the 20 mm when you meet your first Blue Undead. [Hey, what's that blue light over there? Why are the CBR's kicking off? I'm going to throw a frag grenade at it. What do you mean it's still coming? My rifle shots don't seem to be doing much? It's between me and the vehicle? It's coming closer? . . .] □

Recon Team Manifest

As *Morrow Project* director, you may be so busy running your players through adventures that, when they finally reach a supply cache known to contain weapons and other goodies, you suddenly realize you haven't had time to think about the cache's contents. To prevent frantic die-rolling and desperate improvisation of supply lists, here is the author's Recon Team Manifest. Standard supply caches are assumed to be prepackaged at the factory, sealed, and placed intact. Some caches may also contain special equipment, but these supplies will always be available. This list is not "official," but offered as a suggested starting point for other GMs. Note that the author tends to equip his teams a little more heavily than is typical.

Item	Total Amount	Cache #
Ammo 5.52x45mm.	6 cases	all
Ammo 5.52x45mm. Linked	6 cases	all
Ammo 7.62x51mm.	6 cases	all
Ammo 7.62x51mm. Linked	6 cases	all
Ammo 9x19mm.	6 cases	all
Ammo 12.7x99mm. Linked	6 cases	all
Ammo 20mm L (combat load)	6 cases	all
Ammo 12-gauge 00 buckshot	12 cases	all
Ammo .30-06 caliber	4 cases	3, 6
Ammo .357 magnum	4 cases	2, 5
Ammo .44 magnum	4 cases	1, 4
M72A2 LAW	12	all
Armbrust 3000	12	all
HP-35 kit (silencer, 3 mags, holster)	6	all
Ingram M10 submachine gun, silenced	2	1, 3
Uzi No. 2 Mk A submachine gun	2	2, 4
S&W M29-6½ revolver (.44 mag)	2	1, 2
S&W M27-3½ revolver (.357 mag)	2	5, 6
M16A1 with M203 grenade launcher	1	6
M174E3 grenade launcher	1	5
HK69A1 grenade launcher	2	3, 4
M79 grenade launcher	2	1, 2
Stoner Weapon Kits (complete)	2	5, 6
M60 or Mag-58 machine-gun	1	1
M2HB machine-gun (with tripod)	1	4
High-Standard M10A shotgun	2	2, 5
Atchisson Assault Shotgun	2	4, 6
Hafla-35 kit	4	1, 2, 5, 6
M202A1 Flame Weapon kit	1	5
M47 Dragon guided missile kit	2	1, 6
FIN-92A Stinger guided missile kit	2	3, 4
M122 weapon tripods	2	1, 4
M9823 Starlight Scope	2	2, 5
Telescopic Sights	2	3, 6
M26A1 Frag grenades	6 cases	all
M34 WP grenades	4 cases	2, 3, 4, 5
AN-M8 HC Smoke grenades	3 cases	1, 3, 5
M6 CN-DM Gas grenades	4 cases	1, 3, 4, 6
M7A3 CS Gas grenades	3 cases	2, 4, 6
M9A1 BZ Gas grenades	2 cases	2, 5
AN-M14 TH3 Thermite grenades	3 cases	1, 2, 3
MK3A2 TNT Explosive grenades	3 cases	4, 5, 6
MK1 Flare grenades	3 cases	2, 4, 6
M381 HE 40mm grenades	6 cases	all
M433 HEDP 40mm grenades	4 cases	1, 2, 5, 6
M651 CS Gas 40mm grenades	6 cases	all
M576E2 MP 40mm grenades	3 cases	2, 3, 4
M583 Flare 40mm grenades	2 cases	1,6
M585 White 40mm grenades	1 case	2
M663 Green 40mm grenades	1 case	3
M664 Red 40mm grenades	1 case	4
Stunbag 40mm grenades	1 case	5
M25 Antipersonnel mines	2 cases	1, 4
M16A1 Antipersonnel mines	2 cases	2, 5
M19 Antitank mines	2 cases	3, 6
M18A1 Claymore mines	6 cases	all
M183 Demo Packs	6 cases	all
Primercord	3 cases	4, 5, 6
M2A1 Detonator	1 case	1
M1 Timer Detonator	2 cases	2, 5
M700 Time Fuse	1 case	4
M7 Blasting Cap	2 cases	3, 6
M60 Fuse Igniter	1 case	4
Basic Pack	12	all
Resistweave Coveralls	30	all
Boots	12 pairs	all
KCB-70 Knife/Bayonet	12	all
M17A1 Gas Mask	12	all
M1 CBR kit	18	all
Cold Kit	12	all
Mountain Kit	3	1, 3, 5
Ration Packs	24	all
Trade Packs	12	all
AN/PRC-68 Personal Communicator	12	all
AN/PRC-70 Backpack Communicator	4	2, 3, 4, 5
AN/TVS-5 Electronic Binoculars	2	1, 4
AN/PAS-7 Thermal Viewer	2	2, 5
Magnetic Sensor	2	3, 6
CP-7 Binoculars	4	1, 2, 5, 6
AN/PPS-05 Portable Radar	2	1, 6
Power Supply	2	3, 5
Medkit	12	all
Large Medkit	6	all
Universal Antidote	6	all
Fusion Pack	2	2, 4
Generator, Basic (wind, water, fuel)	3	1, 3, 5
Generator, Multifuel	3	2, 4, 6
Drug Kit	1	4
Surgical Kit	1	4
Woodworking Tool Kit	1	5
Metalworking Tool Kit	1	6
Salvage Tool Kit (crowbar, shovel, block and tackle, bolt cutters, 50 m. chain, steel cable, pry bar, pick, general tool kit, laser torch, welder's gloves and mask)	1	1
Chainsaw, multifuel	2	3, 5
Nuts and Bolts, 50 kg. assorted	1	6
Nails, 50 kg. 8-penny	1	5
Heavy-duty sewing machine, electric	2	1, 6
Pedal sewing machine	4	2, 3, 4, 5
Multipower loom (steam or electric)	2	3, 6
Bolts of cloth	varies	all
Seed corn	600 kg	all
Electronic tool kit	1	2
Vehicular Parts	varies	1, 3, 6
Scratch Plow	2	3, 6
Gunsmithing Kit	1	3
Metal Stock	varies	6
Alcohol Still (fuel)	1	4
Civilian Issue Weapon Kits (each weapon comes with 50 rounds)		
Remington M870 shotgun	12	1, 6
Remington M1984 lever, .44 mag.	6	4
S&W M1500, bolt, 30.06 (3 scopes)	6	3
S&W M19 6" revolver, .357 mag	24	2, 5

Manifest assumptions:

1. Under *Cache #*, "all" means standard equipment in each cache.
2. *Total Amount* is total amount available to the team. If greater than the number of caches stored in, spread the amount evenly among those caches (for example, both cache 1 and cache 4 would have two cases of .44 mag. ammo).
3. When a "kit" is referred to, it is assumed to be a standard Morrow Project weapon kit (for instance, an M47 Dragon kit consists of the launcher and three missiles). All kits are taken from the standard *Morrow Project* rules with the exception of the Civilian Issue kits.
4. Civilian issue weapons are to be issued for defense to civilians in the team's "base area," if there is one. The E-factors: Remington M870, standard shotgun; M1984 lever action in .44 mag, E-factor=15; M1500 bolt action rifle, E-factor=17; M19 6" barrel revolver; E-factor=10.

MASTERING THE GAME

How to CHILL™ Your Players

by Troy Denning, Pacesetter Ltd.

Unless you're a CIA strategist or play the *Dallas* roleplaying game every week, you know that the object of any game is to have fun. The object of the *Chill* game is to have fun scaring your players, so they can have fun being scared. But before discussing how to scare your PCs, we need to ask:

What's so fun about having your stomach turn more somersaults than Mary Lou Retton? Why on earth would anybody pay good money to see *Friday the 13th, Part V,* especially after *Parts I, II, III,* and *IV?*

Just what makes being scared fun?

Remember the old joke about the man beating his toe with a hammer? When asked why he abused his foot, he replied, "Because it feels so good when I stop." Something similar is at work in human psychology. Freud called it the *Pleasure Principle*. Simply put, pleasure is created by releasing tension. The more tension you create, the more fun you have when it's released. Not many things create more tension than fear.

Start Small and Build

If you want to give your players a scare — a really "I'm-going-to-wet-my-pants" scare — you must plan your gaming adventures to build tension. One encounter must lead to a more serious encounter in a logical, inevitable order. The consequences of failure must become more serious as the players become more embroiled in the plot. Even as the players relieve the tension in one encounter, you must wind the spring tighter in the next, so that each encounter is more fun than the last. This series of encounters must build to a climax, a tension-peak, where the characters succeed or fail totally.

The climax is the most important part of any adventure. The players have been working for this moment throughout the adventure, so it must be exciting — and, in a *Chill* game, that means it had better be downright terrifying! Fortunately, a lot of factors work in your favor. If you've done your job well so far, the tension level will already be high. You will have had plenty of time to arrange this encounter for maximum fright power, so the players will be wound as tight as the spring on a mousetrap, ready to snap whenever you trip the trigger.

In order to set the trap even more effectively, when you plan an adventure know the type of climax you want. Usually, the climax means the PCs find the creature and attempt to destroy it, but this is not the only possibility. For instance, releasing a fellow character from the curse of lycanthropy could wind the tension-spring much tighter than simply shooting an unsuspecting werewolf in the back.

Establish Mood

The first step is to establish an apprehensive mood. It's usually best to start with an oppressively normal setting — a setting that seems just a little too normal. Next, throw in a normal encounter — something that would happen in the streets of your hometown. But let the encounter involve something just the slightest bit abnormal, such as snow in the summer or an eccentric NPC, and your players' imaginations will work around the clock. Then let the fabric unravel slowly, the encounters becoming progressively more weird.

As the PCs explore the situation, let them discover that they are totally alone in their endeavors. Even in the center of a large city, they can expect no help; other citizens will consider them eccentric, or even criminally insane, if they reveal their suspicions. If the PCs can be isolated physically, all the better; but make sure the PCs realize that whatever they do, no help will come.

Finally, throughout an adventure, use your voice and whatever acting ability you possess to maintain the mood. Whisper if the PCs are in a deserted graveyard; during a storm, speak loudly as if you can't be heard. Props work too, but only if used sparingly. Keep in mind that as tension builds, these dramatic aids work more effectively and you can use them more liberally.

Mystery

As the PCs explore the adventure setting and find progressively weirder things, they will begin to wonder just what the heck is happening. Provide a few clues, but don't unveil the mystery too quickly. Allow the PCs to draw a few conclusions before they have all the facts, then drop another clue that smashes their carefully constructed theories.

Try the technique of misdirection: provide a few carefully selected clues that lead to an obvious (though incorrect) conclusion, then watch the tension mount as the PCs act on their erroneous deductions. Make sure, though, that sharp players can interpret these clues correctly. Totally false leads will frustrate players instead of frightening them.

Usually, it is best not to allow the PCs to know what they're facing until well into the adventure. The human mind is remarkably adept at dealing with problems it can identify; but let it grapple with a few unexplained occurrences, and it frightens them into hysteria. So, don't reveal all early in the game; let your players interpret clues in the worst possible light and take precautions against imaginary creatures. More often than not, these creatures will frighten them more than anything you have in store.

Build Suspense

When the PCs begin to unravel the mystery, be prepared to let the suspense mount. Suspense, at its best, is marked by expectation combined with uncertainty. Once the players know what they're dealing with, they will expect the creature to act in certain ways. Surprise the characters by meeting their expectations in unpredictable ways. For instance, delay the werewolf's inevitable attack until the last possible moment, or have the vampire bite the least likely victim.

Another good way to create suspense is to establish a pattern, but a pattern which doesn't lend itself to the PCs' aid. Remember the music in *Jaws?* When the music played, you knew the big tuna was about to put the bite on somebody — but on whom, and where? Once a pattern is established, you can further heighten the suspense by introducing a variation on the pattern. For instance, a PC is staying in a hotel. Every night, precisely at midnight, he hears footsteps pass overhead in the attic. Tonight, however, the footsteps stop directly over his bed. What's going to happen next?

Humans rely primarily on sight to sense the outside world — if you put the characters in a position in which it is impossible to see (for example, by using the Darken discipline), the tension level automatically rises. Next, eliminate the ability to hear, and the PCs know they're really in trouble. When you describe an encounter in terms of how it smells and feels (and yuccch, even how it tastes), the PCs will jump at the flip of a page.

If you know of anything that really gives your players the creeps, don't hesitate to use it

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in your adventure. For example, if a player hates bugs, how about using Enormity on a cockroach and having it attack?

A little of the grotesque is enough, however. A pot of blood cooking on the stove might give your players the chills, but a graphic description of how it got there will send them scurrying for *Trivial Pursuit*. When dealing with the gross, work by suggestion rather than graphic illustration.

Play the creature as if it is truly evil and cunning. *Chill* creatures enjoy tormenting the PCs, and will keep unfortunate victims alive just to watch them suffer. So, don't start the adventure with an all-out strike. Start by trying to work their Willpower down, and when the PCs are reduced to blubbering idiots, have the creature dispose of them.

As the creatures toy with the PCs, it might become subtly apparent to the unfortunates that there's more at stake here than just their lives. For instance, if they're facing a vampire, defeat means eternal existence as one of the undead, in servitude to the very creature they attempted to destroy. The possibility of character death is a fine tension-building device, but a fate worse than death is even more effective.

Keep in mind, too, that while creatures enjoy tormenting PCs, destroying S.A.V.E. envoys is more than a casual hobby with them. Once an envoy makes his presence known to a creature, someday that creature will attack. It may have more important tasks to attend to immediately, but it will be back. And it'll keep coming back until it destroys the character.

Try to construct your scenario so that the PCs realize they're operating against the clock, or know they're being hounded by a creature. The constant pursuit and/or pressure as time steadily ticks away will add a whole new level of tension; each minute that passes winds the spring a little tighter.

The Climax

The PCs have finally solved the mystery and survived the suspense. They've gathered their equipment and now they're ready to tackle the big cheese. The tension level is high, and they're primed for action. How do you make the final encounter live up to their expectations?

First, remember this is the scene you've been building toward throughout the adventure. Most of the action should flow naturally out of what has already happened. To a large extent, your job takes care of itself here, as long as you keep a few things in mind.

By the climax of the adventure, the creature should believe that the PCs represent a real threat, and will react accordingly. That doesn't mean that it'll hit the PCs with everything it has right away, however. Like a good general, the creature will probe a little to uncover weaknesses.

Once the creature thinks it has found a weakness, it will form an intelligent plan of attack. If it thinks the characters stand a good chance of destroying it, it might try to split them up and attack each individually, or try to escape and fight another day. On the other hand, if it believes it has the upper hand, it could first try to wear its opponents down or place them at a further disadvantage by using its disciplines.

Generally, when it does move in for the kill, a creature will try to attack using disciplines first. Most creatures prefer to use disciplines from afar, if possible, without opening themselves up to attack from the PCs. Finally, when it has worn its opponents down as far as possible, the creature will attack physically or with fatal disciplines, whichever is most efficient. Clever creatures will not have spent all their Willpower by this time; they will hold the use of at least one discipline for an emergency.

No matter how desperate a creature gets during combat, it always maintains an arrogance toward the PCs, as if this encounter is mere child's play. This is the climax; the PCs should not know whether they're going to win or lose until the creature collapses in a pile of dust and disappears to the Unknown.

Know the rules dealing with the Evil Way, and keep careful track of the creature's Willpower. Creatures are tough enough without giving them any advantages due to misusing a rule. A creature that uses disciplines without regard to Willpower will seem unbeatable to the PCs, and the tension of the climax will quickly turn to frustration.

Final Tips

There are a couple of things to keep in mind throughout your adventure.

First, despite the fact that the idea of a *Chill* game is to scare the players, it's possible to place too much emphasis on frightening them. As the CM (Chill Master), you have two jobs: to scare the players and to act as an impartial referee. Never confuse the two roles; the *creatures* are out to get the characters, not you. Scare the players by setting the proper mood and roleplaying effectively, but not by using your role as referee to stack the deck.

Second, *Chill* can't be played "hack 'n' slash." A *Chill* plot should be centered around one creature, and this creature doesn't need much help. Players who shoot first and ask questions later will run out of time very quickly, so encourage investigation and forethought. Reward thinking players with combat advantages or useful information.

There are a lot of ways to construct a frightening adventure. The ones discussed here are some of Pacesetter's favorite tools for giving people the *Chills*. Use them however you see fit, in any combination and with your own special tricks, as long as your players shriek with fear.

One final note: if you scare anybody to death, hide this article and deny everything. □

Tips, Skills, and Professions for Horror Games

by W. Peter Miller

The new generation of horror roleplaying games is here. ***Call of Cthulhu*** led the pack that now includes ***Chill, Stalking the Night Fantastic, Witch Hunt,*** and ***Justice Inc.*** As you prepare to referee a game of this type, there are some useful things to remember.

Remember *reality.* So many weird events will be happening that it is important to keep the real world real. This can also serve to emphasize the supernatural occurrences. Fighting off demon worshippers, unknown gods, and creatures of darkness is exciting, but the real world connections must be kept in perspective. For the most part the characters will be acting outside the law. Innocent bystanders, and even the dupes of the master forces, must be treated like human beings. If the players get out of hand and become unnecessarily violent or ruthless, they must be stopped cold — by the *authorities.* If you have the forces of evil stop the characters they will only try to get even and become that much more ruthless.

Another anchor to the real world is a historical setting. Even going back to the '50s will be enough. By placing the characters against this historic backdrop, you'll make it much easier for the players to suspend their disbelief and accept the macabre happenings of your adventure.

The best way to get ideas to keep things fresh is to read. You must have some interest in horror if you are planning on running a campaign of that type. Go to a good used bookstore and buy some books. Horror anthologies are a good place to start. Some examples would be *Mysteries of the Worm* by Robert Bloch, *Night Shift* by Stephen King, *Dark Forces* (edited by Kirby McCauley), and *Modern Masters of Horror* (edited by Frank Coffey). These anthologies have a wide variety of authors and stories.

Most importantly, don't be afraid to make things *fun.* Humor between the scares can go a long way toward making the campaign more enjoyable for everyone.

New Skills

Often a player may want something new or different in a player character. Sometimes a special NPC can brighten up an otherwise average situation because the characters may be off guard when they encounter something new. Here are a few additional skills that may just fill your bill. Those marked with an asterisk (*) can be used at a basic level by anyone.

Music: The character can play a specific musical instrument or sing, read music, and is familiar with music jargon and lingo. This skill can be used to round out a character in addition to allowing a character to become a professional musician. That kind of freelance profession can allow a character great freedom in wandering the globe in search of adventure.

**Sound recording:* The character understands how to use sound recording equipment and knows where to place microphones for the best sound reproduction. This skill can also help a character determine if a recording is authentic or a hoax.

**Cinematography/Videography:* Depending on the time frame (modern characters may take this skill twice to have each), the character understands the methods of filming/videotaping an event (real or staged). Filmed events can appear real to many viewers. They can also be additional evidence for investigators of the unknown.

Film/Video Editing: The character understands the techniques and aesthetics of film or videotape editing.

Bureacracy: The character understands the bureaucracy of a given institution. Examples would be banks, the Catholic Church, the US legal system, motion picture production companies, etc. This skill can allow a character to bypass certain paperwork and to cut through red tape.

**Acting:* The character can convince strangers that he or she is really someone else or in some other profession. This skill is very useful when trying to gain allies or infiltrate enemy ranks.

**Theology:* The character understands the history and beliefs of a chosen religion. The character has the normal chance to know a specific fact about that religion. Examples: Christianity, Hinduism, Mayan, Ancient Roman, etc.

Professions

There are many careers open to characters that aren't discussed in any of the rulebooks. The skills above can be used to help players create characters of the professions listed below. These professions are designed to help bring variety to a campaign game.

Lawyer: A lawyer can be indispensable for rescuing characters from the clutches of the law — or using the law to thwart the machinations of the forces of evil.

Suggested skills: Accounting, Bureaucracy, Debate, Fast Talk, History, Law, Library Use, Oratory, Psychology.

Filmmaker: This character could be anything from an old-time newsreel photographer to an experimental video artist to a Hollywood mogul.

Suggested skills: Bureaucracy: Motion Pictures/Television, Cinematography/Videography, Film/Video Editing, Library Use, Oratory, Sound Recording.

Photographer/Photojournalist: Freelance photographers can take their work with them and visit exotic locales all over the globe. With the right contacts they might even be able to get paid for their globetrotting.

Suggested skills: Bureaucracy: Newspapers.

Clergy: When creating characters, most referees and players give little thought to the possibilities of a clergyman. The term "clergy" will be used freely to describe members of virtually any religious organization (but not devil-worshippers and the like).

There is tremendous dramatic potential inherent in a clergyman involved with the occult. After all, the character is directly confronting creatures whose mere existence opposes his or her religious beliefs. Those beliefs may or may not be shaken by the supernatural forces that confront the character. The conflict may shatter the character's beliefs, or it may make them unshakeable.

The presence of a clergyman in ***Call of Cthulhu*** can be a Sanity-preserving force for those characters of the clergyman's religion. When making sanity rolls, add 10% in the character's favor when he or she is in the presence of a clergyman. Members of the clergy can also restore Sanity (like a psychiatrist) if they buy the Psychoanalyze skill. This again applies only to members of their church.

Suggested skills: Bureaucracy: Church, History, Library Use, Linguist, Oratory, Psychology, Theology. □

MASTERING THE GAME

PARANOIA

by Ken Rolston, West End Games

You, Too, May Qualify for the
Famous Gamemasters School
of PARANOID Excellence
All you have to do is draw this figure . . .

Friends ask me — they say, "Ken, what's so hard about gamemastering *Paranoia*? Just kill the bastards, right?"

I say to them, "Well, yes . . . but the trick is making sure they're having fun while you're doing it."

The Computer ("Praised be Thy Divine Circuits") has instructed me to divulge some of the cheap tricks I employ in making *Paranoia* fun for all its loyal citizens.

Trigger Madness

Expect the initial reaction to *Paranoia* to be a joyous release from the generally solemn themes of other roleplaying games.[1] Players will gleefully exterminate one another at the drop of the hat, exhilarated by the prospect of ruthless play against the most imposing opponents — player-characters.

Glorious fun though this is, it is only the lowest form of *Paranoia* merriment. In order to move forward to the more subtle and Byzantine of Alpha Complex's "Catch-22 No-Win Terminal Runarounds," you have to get the players to put away their lasers for an instant and start moving in the direction of adventure.

Here's the sequence of tricks I use to get the players' minds out of OK-Corral mode and into "On with the Adventure."

1. The Computer, which has been monitoring the mission through com units, sends Vulture Squadrons to summarily execute all Troubleshooters who are damaging Computer property (i.e., shooting up Troubleshooters and the environs with their weapons). One blast with a tacnuke conerifle and the first set of clones is history. A reluctance to roleplay molecules wafting about may deter the next clone generation from a repeat of their predecessors' trigger-happy behaviors.

2. If PCs Mark II persist in expending their ammo with gay abandon, repeat step **1**, but bring Clones Mark III to a special Internal Security installation for "weapon inspection" before returning them to the mission. The Int-Sec troopers strip the PCs and go off in another room with the weapons, where techs install remote-control safety devices in all weapons.

Then the weapons are returned to the PCs, and the sanest player is taken aside and made party leader. He is given a device that turns the other PCs' weapons on and off, *and* is breveted to a high security clearance and given Kevlar armor. Henceforth the PC weapons only function at the whim of the sanest leader.

Obviously this doesn't deter PCs from whacking each other with melee weapons. You may choose to remove the gripping appendages of such PCs for "inspection," or to install surgical implants that cause the PCs to explode (or caper merrily) when the leader presses a control button.

3. If PCs Mark III somehow persist in madcap mayhem, repeat step **1**, only this time a potent sleep gas round from the conerifle knocks out the PCs. They awake restrained in debriefing booths resembling iron maidens.

Now carry out an extensive and detailed debriefing with each player, reminding them how important it is that they achieve their mission *without further delay*. How terrible it is to damage Computer property. And how difficult it is to have roleplaying fun while their characters are restrained in debriefing booths. Then return them to their mission.

4. If they don't wise up this time, get out *The Longest Day* and start setting up the 1603 counters and 6½ maps. Maybe they'll get the point.

Channeling the PCs

Learn the following principle of *Paranoia* gamemaster control: *Always maintain triple redundancy of player character coercion systems.* In *Paranoia*, if the PCs aren't doing what you want them to, there are many resources for steering them back on the track.

1. THE COMPUTER. The Computer is everywhere. Cameras scan every room and corridor. Electronic ears bring every whisper to The Computer's attention. Like Santa, The Computer knows when you've been bad or good.

And the voice of The Computer is everywhere. Public address systems carry public and private messages to every corner of Alpha Complex. And even if the PC is outside the Complex, or in an abandoned corridor, The Computer can speak through the PC com units.[2] Use the Computer's voice to guide the PC to the action of behavior you desire. A polite hint is usually sufficient, particularly if you make an object lesson out of anyone who fails to respond cheerfully and loyally to polite hints.

2. MISSION ALERTS. Give the PCs very specific orders.

****MISSION ALERT****

GO TO ROOM 3-4933-DFT. WALK IN A STRAIGHT LINE. NO TALKING. DON'T POKE OR SHOVE EACH OTHER AND KEEP YOUR BLASTERS IN YOUR HOLSTERS. DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT GOING ANYWHERE BUT ROOM 3-4933-DFT. DON'T TOUCH WALLS, DOORS, OR OTHER CITIZENS ON THE WAY. SERVE THE COMPUTER. THE COMPUTER WILL FIX YOUR WAGON IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW DIRECTIONS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

3. MESSENGERS. If the PCs encounter a circumstance not specifically covered in their orders, or if the players figure out some sneaky way to warp or ignore the intentions of your orders, send a breathless messenger with an urgent mission update clarifying The Computer's wishes in the matter.

****SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH****

STOP THAT! STOP IT RIGHT NOW! DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT DOING THAT AGAIN. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

4. HIGH-STATUS NPCs. The timely arrival of an NPC with a higher security clearance than the ranking PC is a perfect channeling device, since all citizens are required to defer to other citizens of higher clearance. PCs may whine about having prior-

[1] We don't intend to develop the obvious conclusion that other roleplaying games are less fun than *Paranoia*. We hold these truths to be self-evident. Seriously, other RPGs may be interesting and dramatic, even charming and light-hearted, but *Paranoia* is particularly designed to be FUN.

[2] And if the PC isn't wearing his com unit, well, that's all you needed to know, anyway. Fry, traitor!

ity orders from an even-higher authority, but proving it is often difficult, and NPC muck-a-mucks are notably excitable when their authority is questioned.

5. NPC BOTS. Assign an NPC bot to the party. Store all information critical to the mission's success in the bot's brain. Then prohibit the PCs from accessing that information ("I'm sorry. That information is not available at your clearance"). Now the PCs have to do what the bot tells them when it feels like telling them.

The PCs should also have signed an intimidating form when the bot was issued, clearly indicating how valuable the bot is and how tragic it would be if the bot were to come to harm. Thus, when the bot darts off down a corridor, the PCs must pursue and protect their assigned equipment. This is a lovely way to lead PCs where you want them, usually into serious trouble.

6. NPC PARTY LEADERS. A sure-fire way to drag the PCs around by the nose — *until* the leader dies. This is likely to become a regular event when the PCs figure out what you're up to; the mission may turn into a game of "Kill the Leader."

Worse things could happen. Just keep hustling clone replacements to the party, and have the leader hint darkly about explaining the high leader mortality rate in de-briefing. Or send the clone replacement in the company of a troop of jovial Vulture Squadron bodyguards.

7. INTERNAL SECURITY TROOPERS, COMBOTS, GUARDBOTS, AND VULTURE SQUADRON LEADERS. These guys often show up in conjunction with special messengers and dispatches. Or in response to citizens' complaints about annoying noises (like weapon fire and tortured shrieks) in local corridors. These Defenders of Law and Order will often have cordial suggestions about what the PCs ought to do.

Striking the Right Tone in Killing the Bastards

Sure, GMs should delight in their power to reduce PCs to their component atoms. Of course the Troubleshooters are doomed to failure. However . . .

Though failure is inevitable, and multiply iterated, success is also inevitable (given an endless supply of clone families). Encourage the PCs to look at the bright side of things. "Surely your clone will do better." Remind them that anything worth doing is worth doing over and over again, and there is more than one way to skin a petbot.

However, be tolerant of a certain amount of whining. And don't hose them too much. You must permit them occasional successes, if only to set them up for later hose-jobs.

Give the Players Lots of Stuff to Do

Paranoia presents the gamemaster with a terrible temptation to be entertaining. A good GM can make a ***Paranoia*** session even better than watching re-runs of *Charlie's Angels*.

But you have to remember — let the players *do* things! This is a game. And the players are gaming. Gaming is action. The players have to be able to take action, early and often, or they will be annoyed, no matter how entertaining you are.

Paranoia player-characters mostly do the following kinds of actions:

1. SHOOT (very primitive problem-solving). They do an awful lot of this. They seem to enjoy it.

2. TALK/LIE/WHINE (talking your way out of problems). They do this when they can't shoot. It isn't as destructive, but it requires a lot more creativity and wit, which players seem to enjoy displaying.

3. PUZZLE (thinking about problems). When they can't shoot or talk their way around a problem, they will think about it. Sometimes they come up with really marvelous solutions, and this makes them happy.

4. EXPERIMENT (solving problems by thinking up neat little tests). This is science along the lines of "let's put these ants in an aluminum pot, put it in the sun, and see what happens." Kid science. Fun stuff.

Most of this has to do with testing experimental equipment, though with the uncertainty inherent in operating *any* equipment in ***Paranoia***, using an elevator may qualify as basic scientific research.

5. CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO EVILS (the problem of choosing between the horrible and the terrible). A frequent occupation in ***Paranoia***, and hard work. PCs may spend lots of time agonizing over which variety of treason they want to be executed for, or which of two hopeless courses of action to take.

6. RESPOND TO DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES (solving problems without time to think about them). This type of PC action is of the general form "Gee, it looks like you're doomed. Now what do you do?" This is knee-jerk problem-solving — the PCs don't really have time to think; they can only flail about in panic. Lotsa fun.

One more thing — good ***Paranoia*** players often spend a lot of time writing notes. This is a lot of fun. Here's how I handle notes.

All notes are placed in front of me, with the most recent note received on the top. From time to time (every five or ten minutes at least; sometimes much more often when there is a heavy note flow) I pick the notes up and read them in first-received order.

I explain to the players how I judge the notes. The shorter the note, the more promptly the action takes place, but the greater latitude I have in judging the result. On the other hand, a long, detailed note implies careful planning and execution, and the result is likely to be closer to the player's stated intention.

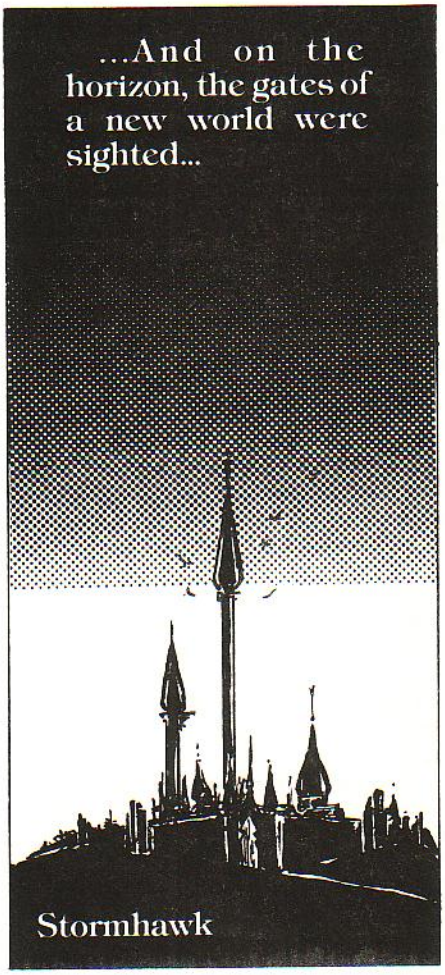
Paranoia players love to write notes. It gives them a chance to be doing something all the time, even when the GM's attention is focused on some other activity. The notes usually concern clever little boobytraps or double-crosses, private com reports of a companion's treasonable acts, or going on record as "watching out" for sneaky stuff from other players. Encourage this practice, because it keeps the players happy, busy, and out of your hair.

Make sure the PCs get plenty of chances to do these wonderful gaming things. Keep them busy, or they will get restless and start whining about being bored and wanting to "Do Something."

Obligatory Summary Paragraph

So, there's a bunch of swell tips on how to be a Famous ***Paranoia*** Gamemaster. If you've got some neat ideas on the subject, send them to me in care of the august editors of this magazine. Perhaps they'll find some excuse for printing them.

This article originally appeared in the West End Games newsletter ***The Hexagon Papers****. To get your free copy of this literate house organ, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to West End Games, 251 West 30th St., NY, NY 10001.* □



Traitorious Commie Subversion

Unauthorized *Paranoia* Repair Kit

by Allen Varney

West End Games' ***Paranoia*** roleplaying game is, to my mind, a successful design *despite* its best efforts. Players assuming the role of "Troubleshooters" in an underground city-complex ruled by an insane Computer really are made to feel — keenly — the frustrating, suspicious, Kafkaesque atmosphere ***Paranoia***'s designers sought to induce. The game's spirit and lighthearted approach make it unique in the choked roleplaying market. But this approach is hardly aided by the game's rules and mechanics.

As we were playing ***Paranoia*** for review in *Space Gamer* (the review ran in *SG* 72), my fellow Troubleshooters and I constantly came up against rules that just made us shake our heads in disbelief. The game is remarkably schizophrenic: Though it exhorts the GM to maintain a breakneck pace and fluid action, it relies on complicated charts and formulae at almost every point. (It's even written in SPI case format!) We're given detailed descriptions of equipment and vehicles — why? The characters have attributes and skills that *never* figure in *any* situation — why? The combat system requires three die rolls for every hit — why? why? why?

— *Why doesn't someone fix it?* I thought. So, however presumptuous this traitorous impulse, I'll try smoothing ***Paranoia***'s wrinkles. Note that these revisions are not authorized by West End Games or ***Paranoia***'s designers, so anyone who adopts them is a commie. Here goes:

Character Generation

As a preliminary note, let me point out that there is no reason whatever to use ten-sided dice in ***Paranoia*** instead of ordinary, widely-available six-siders. No reason at all. But one must cooperate with the inevitable. Sigh.

Attributes: Roll 2D10 for each of these three attributes: Strength, Dexterity, and Moxie. Roll 1D10 and add 5 for your Power Index. (If you'd prefer not to entrust all your future gaming enjoyment to four rolls of the dice, take 35 points and divide them among the attributes as you see fit; add five more "free" points to whatever you put in your Power Index.)

The only figured attributes are Carrying Capacity and Fighting Bonus. Carrying Capacity (in kilograms) is 25 plus your Strength; your Fighting Bonus is 1% for every point your Dexterity is over 10, or −1% (*negative* 1%) for every point it's *under* 10. *Example:* If your Dexterity is 15, your Fighting Bonus is 5%; if your Dexterity is only 9, your Fighting Bonus is −1%. (Alternatively, you can consult Chart 3.3.1 in the usual way to get your Carrying Capacity and Fighting Bonus percentage.)

If anything in the existing game adventures requires attribute checks on Agility or Manual Dexterity, check against Dexterity. For Endurance checks, use Strength. For Mechanical Aptitude, use Moxie. For Chutzpah, *roleplay it.* What are you, a robot?

Mutant Powers and Secret Societies: Roll for these in the usual way for your first clone, but *roll again for each subsequent clone.* If your first clone's mutant power or secret society is discovered, all the other players will know it as your next clone trots into action. Now a moment's thought shows that all members of a clone family would logically have the same mutant power; but another moment's thought shows that the whole concept of mutant powers is ludicrous anyway, so why not have some fun?

Skills: That "skill tree" needs work. As a quick fix, consider that you can buy any skill for a cost (in skill points) equal to the number after the skill; you get all the skills "above" it on the tree for free. *Example:* You buy Laser Rifle (4) for four points, and get Laser (3), Aimed Weapon Combat (2), and Basics (1) for free. The skills you buy must be appropriate to your service group, unless they're treasonous. Additional skills on the same branch and level of the tree cost one point apiece.

Your skill percentage is 10% times the number following the skill. *Example:* If you have Laser Rifle (4) and thus Laser (3), your skill with a laser rifle is 40%, but with other types of lasers it's only 30%.

Your Fighting Bonus is added to any fighting skill you have.

Bookkeeping

We need to keep skill points and credits. Following a suggestion in the ***Paranoia*** review in *SG* 72, we can combine treason points and commendation points into one generic brand of *status points.* Every new Troubleshooter clone family starts at zero status points. When you do something The Computer likes (good luck), you get status points; when the law of averages reasserts itself and you screw up royally, you lose points. If you get to −10 (negative ten) status points, you're a traitor and marked for termination. Fare thee well.

Secret society points — why bother? If you're a GM, you're not going to let anyone live long enough to advance very far in a secret society anyway, right? If you do, promote the characters just often enough to sustain player interest . . . and remember, the higher they rise, the tougher their lives become!

Skills

I'm not persuaded that *any* skills are necessary to a successful ***Paranoia*** adventure — aside from Laser, of course. If you want to keep the skills, I recommend subsuming Con, Oratory, and Spurious Logic under Fast-Talk. (Is there *any* reason their game effects should be differentiated?) All Leadership skills (forgery and bribery involve "leadership"?) should be put under Communications. Self-Improvement: If you're going to force the players into a random character generation system, you ought to make them live with the results — instead of penalizing them skill points for creating the kinds of characteristics they preferred. But if you want, you can keep Strength, Dexterity, and Moxie.

Most of the other skills are of limited use, but ***Paranoia***'s designers continue to think that all this gadgetry (ice gun, gausser, plastiforming, snooper, trailbot) helps the atmosphere, so we might as well keep them.

Combat

"The ***Paranoia*** combat system . . . does not involve complicated calculations of hit points and odds . . . The objective of this system is to produce fast and furious action" (***Gamemaster Handbook***, p. 53).

Paranoia's combat system is acceptable for SPI-type number-crunching wargamers who regard combat procedure as an end in itself. But considered in light of the "fast and furious action" statement above, it's hopeless.

Here's a system for *real* fast and furious action:

Step 1. Somebody attacks someone or something else. Have the attacking player or NPC roll percentile dice. If the roll is above the character's appropriate skill percentage, the attack missed; if the roll is under, the attack *may* hit. If so, remember the number rolled and go to Step 2.

Step 2. How do matters stand when the attack is made? Are the character and target close together or distant? Is it light or dark? Is the target hidden behind a cannister of laughing gas? Is the character firing while balanced on the roof of an autocar that's missing half its treads? Circumstances will adjust the likelihood of a shot hitting.

Also consider the *weapon used* — ordinary laser pistol, clenched fist, or tacnuke — and *how much* the attack roll was made by. If it was just barely successful — rolling 43, say, against a success chance of 45% — maybe the

attack only winged the target, or hit an obstacle, or even missed after all. But when the roll was very low, this indicates great success, a dead-on shot, and/or severe damage. (Note, however, that when dealing with area weapons like flamethrowers and plasma generators, the idea of "missing" may be inapplicable, or even hilarious.)

Of course, the drama and flamboyance of the attack should be a guiding influence in deciding the success of the roll.

If this approach is too free-form for you, try resolving any attack on column 7 of the damage table. Add or subtract some arbitrary percentage based on your opinion of the weapon's deadliness. Lasers get no modification; a kick is −15%; a conerifle might be +10%; a plasma generator — well, do you *really* need to roll?

Any damage? Go to Step 3.

Step 3. All those different armor types — yecch. Go ahead and inflict whatever damage seems appropriate to the circumstances and success of the roll; usually common sense will tell you whether an asbestos suit (say) will stop much damage from a napalm conerifle, or how well blue reflec stops a red laser (perfectly, I'd say; that a Blue-clearance citizen would have armor that's defenseless against weapons of lower security clearance is preposterous).

But more than weapons — more than armor — what crucially affects your determination of success chance and damage is — *What's most fun?* Should that guardbot explode from one rifle shot? Ought the Internal Security infiltrator to continue firing at Troubleshooters even though, by rights, he should be vaporized?

Remember, ***Paranoia***'s "Dramatic Tactical System" needs to go *all the way* — a good guide for determing what will work is "Whatever is, is right" (to quote Alexander Pope). If the players are in some godforsaken warehouse battling traitors, and there's no way a deceased Troubleshooter can be replaced by his clone any time soon, the GM should go to some length to avoid killing a character too far ahead of his fellows (leaving the owning player to sit and watch for the rest of the session). Just wound the guy — and wait for an opportune time when they'll *all* drop like flies.

Conversely, if your favorite NPC is running from the players, and you need to keep him or her around to bushwhack them later — well, only a tyro need be told that all the players' firepower must go for naught. ("Before your tacnuke could go off, a scrubot rolled up and carried it off to a disposal chute. The ground shakes beneath your feet . . .")

Step 4. *Hit location.* Does it matter? Do you care? If so, roll 1D10 and ignore the result. Pick an amusing body part and tell the player that's what got blown off.

As for special weapon rules, different kinds of malfunctions, rules for reloading ammunition, and reduced abilities for clone replacements: Naahh. Just wing all this; the weapon malfunctions or runs out of shots when the player *really* blows a percentile roll, or when it would be entertaining.

Mutant Powers

A character's Power Index should serve only as a guideline to its approximate strength and/or reliability. Never let the "power points" mechanic interfere with the plot. If you need an NPC with Mental Blast to make blast after blast, don't feel obligated to use arithmetic keeping track of points expended.

Game Balance

You may say "But what about game balance?" In ***Paranoia*** this is nonsense. The PCs are alive only through your good graces. If they try to avoid their destinies by crawling through some loophole in the game design, reprimand and vaporize them. If you require renewal of vision and spirit, simply look over your GM screen at the players. Look at that bunch! Are you going to kowtow to their whims and listen to them prattle about "balance"? I should think not.

Remember, they're all going to die pretty soon. You can't get more balanced than that.

The Dumb Gadgets All Those Charts All Those Tables

Forget 'em. Rip them out of the rulebook and tear them into little tiny bits. You'll feel better. If you're in an obstreperous mood, mail the pieces to West End Games; it may help spur them to produce a second edition of ***Paranoia*** — a game which (in case you haven't already figured this out) I recommend highly.

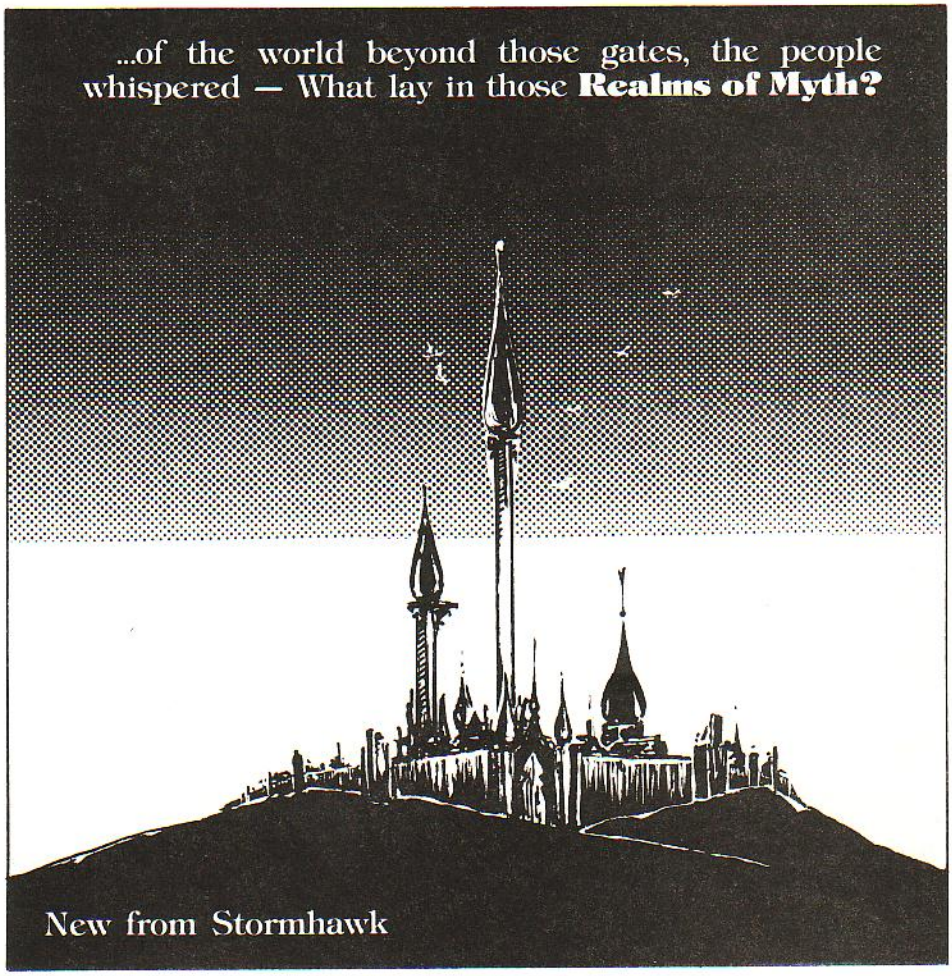
Dear Treasonous Mutant Scum:

The Computer never errs, but designers sometimes do. I'm forced to agree that many of ***Paranoia***'s systems are overly and unnecessarily complex. Ken Rolston and I reviewed your suggested fixes, and think most of them are on-target.

The one objection we have is that your proposed combat system goes overboard in simplifying the game. Your system is one that can *only* work in the hands of an experienced, reasonably impartial GM. Unfortunately, that description applies to very few. The combat system *is* in need of simplification, but I think you go a bit too far.

Incidentally, ***Acute Paranoia***, a rules supplement which will be published in late '85, will include a simplified combat system and some other suggested changes. These changes will be incorporated in ***Paranoia*** when the 2nd Edition is printed.

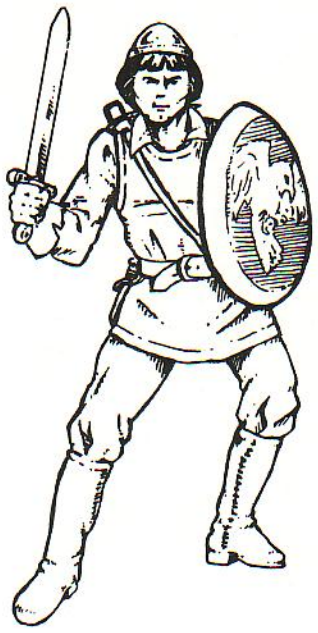
I remain, your humble and obedient servant,
Greg Costikyan
Jersey City, NJ



Designer's Notes:

MAN TO MAN™

by Steve Jackson



Man to Man is the combat game from my Generic Universal RolePlaying System (*GURPS* for short). It's the product of years of work, and the first in what I hope will be a very long line of *GURPS* releases.

I started work on the (then unnamed) *GURPS* in mid-1981. Steve Jackson Games had been going for almost a year. I knew that — someday — we would need our own role-playing system. Which was fine, since I wanted to design it!

I wanted a game that would satisfy three basic needs. First, it would be detailed and realistic; I don't like games where the referee is forced to "fake it" constantly. Second, it would be logical and well-organized. Third, it would be adaptable to any setting and any level of play.

As I worked, I quickly found out that I had bitten off a lot. Time passed. Then, in 1982, Metagaming went out of business. This raised an interesting possibility: Could I buy back the rights to my first RPG, ***The Fantasy Trip,*** and rework it into the kind of game I wanted? Unfortunately, that didn't work out. The asking price was in six figures . . . a bit much!

Between the fruitless *TFT* negotiations and other projects (*Car Wars* material, for instance), not much got done until early 1984. But gradually, it began to come together. In July '84, I announced that we'd shoot for a February 1985 release. That time kept getting pushed back — and farther back — as other projects interfered.

And time crept on — and the projected release date kept getting pushed back — and certain staffers quit using the term "deadline" in my presence. By early 1985, we had decided that, come hell or high water, it would have to be either an Origins or GenCon release — we just couldn't wait any longer.

So I agreed to concentrate on the combat system — to make sure we would have something really good to release for GenCon. And that's what happened.

False Starts

As you may have gathered, the design path wasn't smooth. Something this big required a lot of testing at every stage. And sometimes the testing showed me that my theories weren't so good.

For instance, I really wanted an "action point" system to govern both movement and combat. Each action would have a point cost. Moving one yard would cost 1 point; swinging a sword would cost 2 points; picking something off the floor would cost 4 points; and so on. The higher your DX, the more action points you would have each turn.

The trouble was, when it came down to playtest, nobody liked keeping track of their action points! The system was fairly realistic, but it wasn't playable — because it wasn't enough fun. So we went to the "maneuver" system, where you pick one maneuver each turn, and do only the things allowed by that maneuver.

Another false start involved the map grid. I really wanted to use a square grid for mapping, for several reasons. It makes buildings work out better, for one thing. Well, I worked at it for months. The good news is — it can be done. The bad news is — hexes are still better. The very best square-grid movement rules that I could write were still clunky, compared to using hexagons. So . . . back to the old faithful hexes I went.

And, up until the last month before release, I wanted *Man to Man* to include all types of weaponry. Unfortunately, there just wasn't time to playtest every sort of device — or room to fit them all in and still have a game that would sell for our target price of $9.95. So I had to take out everything from black powder on up. It'll go into a supplement, to be released in '86.

Design Philosophy

Man to Man was planned as an introduction to the *GURPS* system. It is *GURPS,* in microcosm. If you know *MTM,* you'll find that everything to come will fit in logically. There will be very few rules that don't have some basis in the material presented in *MTM!*

Several basic guidelines shaped the whole *GURPS* design. In no particular order, they were:

It's all right to have a lot of rules, as long as you can find them. Experience proves that gamers don't mind complicated rules. In fact, many of us thrive on them! What everybody hates is badly-organized rules. Therefore, I felt free to indulge my own desire to write rules for every likely contingency, and provide a lot of variety — as long as everything was in the Glossary, or the Table of Contents, or both.

Now, nobody will be able to sit down and learn this game from scratch in 30 minutes. Even though the organization is good, there are 60 pages of rules — and at least 25 of those are necessary to start play. But, once you know the game, you can talk a friend through it in 30 minutes or so — or just drop him in and let him learn. And that's the way most people learn new systems. A few brave pioneers learn from the books — everybody else learns from the pioneers.

Friendliness is next to godliness. So the game is indexed, and extensively cross-referenced. A separate pull-out ("Instant Fighters") boils 17 pages of careful character-creation explanation down to two easy-to-use pages of notes and tables — for use once you understand the system. Between the separate charts and tables provided with the game, and the Character Record Sheet, an experienced player can almost dispense with the rulebook! And when the rulebook is required, the Glossary and ToC make it easy to use.

Game designers should be rigorous; supplement designers should be creative. The job of the game designer is to provide a good, solid skeleton that later writers can flesh out in their own ways. I want *MTM,* and the *GURPS* rules to come, to be solid enough that they free adventure-writers from concern about the rules . . . the rules are there! That will let them relax and tell a good story — which is what an adventure writer is supposed to do.

Play should be quick. Character creation shouldn't. Most people seem to like complex character-creation rules. If the rules are too simple, then the characters you create will be equally simple. Or simple-minded. Complex rules allow variety . . . and close duplication of your favorite real (or fictional) characters. *MTM* has fairly complex rules — simple enough to learn, but lots of options! And when later releases add IQ-based skills, lots more "advantages," and disadvantages . . . well, you ought to be able to create any sort of character you can think of.

It's not my job to tell you how to play. Every group plays in its own way. So, wherever possible, *MTM* is written in "multilevel" fashion. If you want detailed combat, use all the optional rules. If you want simple combat (kill the orcs and grab the treasure!) use only the Basic Combat System. You can choose to play rookie fighters, battle-scarred heroes, or anything in between. And though the character creation system is complex, there's an alternate system for "rolling up" characters on the dice. Take your pick!

When in doubt, check reality. The "reality check" became a way of life while *MTM* was in progress. How far can a man throw a grenade? Get a grenade, or something that weighs the same, and check! How much does it weigh? Look it up in an ordnance book. Better yet, find one and weigh it! How fast can you run carrying your own weight in armor? Well, put on the armor and get a stopwatch . . . My old SCA connections were very helpful here. I bet the folks in Shipping will never forget the day I walked in with an armload full of assorted weapons — real swords, spearheads, axes, maces, and whatnot — to weigh them on the postal scale. One thing I found out was that most fantasy games grossly overestimate the weight of weapons. A good broadsword is three pounds, tops. On the other hand, good armor is *heavy* . . .

Realism also helps with consistency, making sure that things from the different worlds will "fit together." If swords have their real weight, and guns have their real weight, then there can't be any silly "Murphys" about relative weights when a 20th-century soldier visits a medieval world. This preoccupation with realism is going to have interesting ramifications soon — what is "real" when you deal with magic, or with superheroes? But I still feel it's the best way to handle the design.

The only thing more important than realism is playability. I really wanted a "realistic" game. But on those occasions when realism butted head-on with playability — that is, with fun — then fun won.

For instance, the first couple of drafts of the combat system followed strict reality on "hit points." An average man swinging a club could incapacitate another average man (if he was unarmored) with a single good blow, and kill him with two or three. That's the way it *really is.* And edged weapons — or guns — are far deadlier!

But a combat system that lets one blow decide the battle isn't much fun. Especially considering the time it takes to design a character. Even if you bring him back to life to fight the battle again, one-blow combats are a drag.

So, at every little decision-point that went into making up the combat system, we chose in favor of less damage. Thus, no individual subsystem is wrong — but, added all together, they give a combat system that makes player characters a little harder to kill than "real people" are. Just because it's more fun. However, you'll never see Gonad the Barbarian running around with 80 hit points. No way. A superhero, maybe — but no natural person is that tough in real life, or in *MTM.*

The Next Steps

So . . . what's next for *GURPS?* A lot. We'll do several *MTM* supplements as soon as we can. The first one, *Orcslayer,* will go to press soon. It's a true roleplaying adventure, but (naturally) it's very heavy on combat. My high-tech weapon book will be out when it's ready — probably the second or third release.

Other proposed *MTM* supplements include a whole book of pregenerated characters; an arena campaign background (including rules for animals); a "city guards" adventure that would include problem-solving as well as hack-and-slash; a dungeon-crawl; a modern-day street-gang adventure; and a lot of others. Some of these will be produced in-house; some will be farmed out to freelance designers (or design groups).

We're also starting a newsletter — free to anybody who buys *MTM* and sends in the questionnaire. It will be a *GURPS* "house organ" with short scenarios, Q&A, errata, revisions, new talents, gadgets, and characters, and whatever else we come up with. The tentative title is *Roleplayer.* It may someday evolve into a "real" magazine — or it may not. Time, and demand, will tell.

And I'm still working very hard on the boxed fantasy set. This is the "complete" roleplaying system . . . total character creation rules, reactions, and all the other things you expect from a full RP system. It will also include the fantasy game-world rules — magic, medieval social systems, fantastic beasts — the whole nine yards. I'm shooting for Origins '86. A great deal of the work has already been done — after all, the original plan was to release the whole thing at Origins this year! And the biggest reason I didn't make it was the combat system — which is now finished, out, and done. But wish me luck anyway.

Once the fantasy set is out, we start releasing the other game-worlds. But that's more than a year from now.

The Final Goal

What am I trying to accomplish with *MTM* and *GURPS?* In a nutshell, I'm trying to establish a game system simple enough for beginners, detailed enough for experts, flexible enough for everybody — and infinitely variable to fit the infinite worlds of fact and fiction. I'm hoping to establish a new tournament standard.

And so far, I'm happy with it. Pick it up, and let me know what you think. □

Comparing *MTM* with *The Fantasy Trip*

When we released *Man to Man* at GenCon, one of the commonest questions was "How different is this from *TFT?*" Or, even more bluntly, "Is this just *TFT* reworked?"

Not a complimentary question, but a fair one. After all, *TFT* was my first RPG design. Before it went out of print, it was very popular. Over the years, literally thousands of gamers must have encouraged me to buy it back. I tried. I couldn't.

So I can understand why someone would ask, "Is this really just *TFT* all over again?" I can even understand why someone might hope the answer was "Yes." But the answer is no. This isn't *TFT.*

It is the same *type* of game. It's a tactically-based roleplaying system. But it's developed far beyond what *TFT* ever was — or, I think, ever could have become, without revisions so massive as to totally change what had already been released. Some of the most important differences:

Character creation. This was the biggest problem with *TFT,* in my opinion. The rules were simplistic, and it was too easy to get "super-characters." Further, once you became a super-character, all heroes, and all wizards, were pretty much alike. *GURPS* — heavily inspired by such third-generation games as *Champions* — has a point-based character system that solves these problems.

Attributes. *TFT* had the "generic" three attributes, found in every RPG: strength, dexterity, and intelligence. *GURPS* uses these three, plus a fourth — Health. Thus, strong characters are not necessarily tough. This totally changes the "optimum" character-creation strategy.

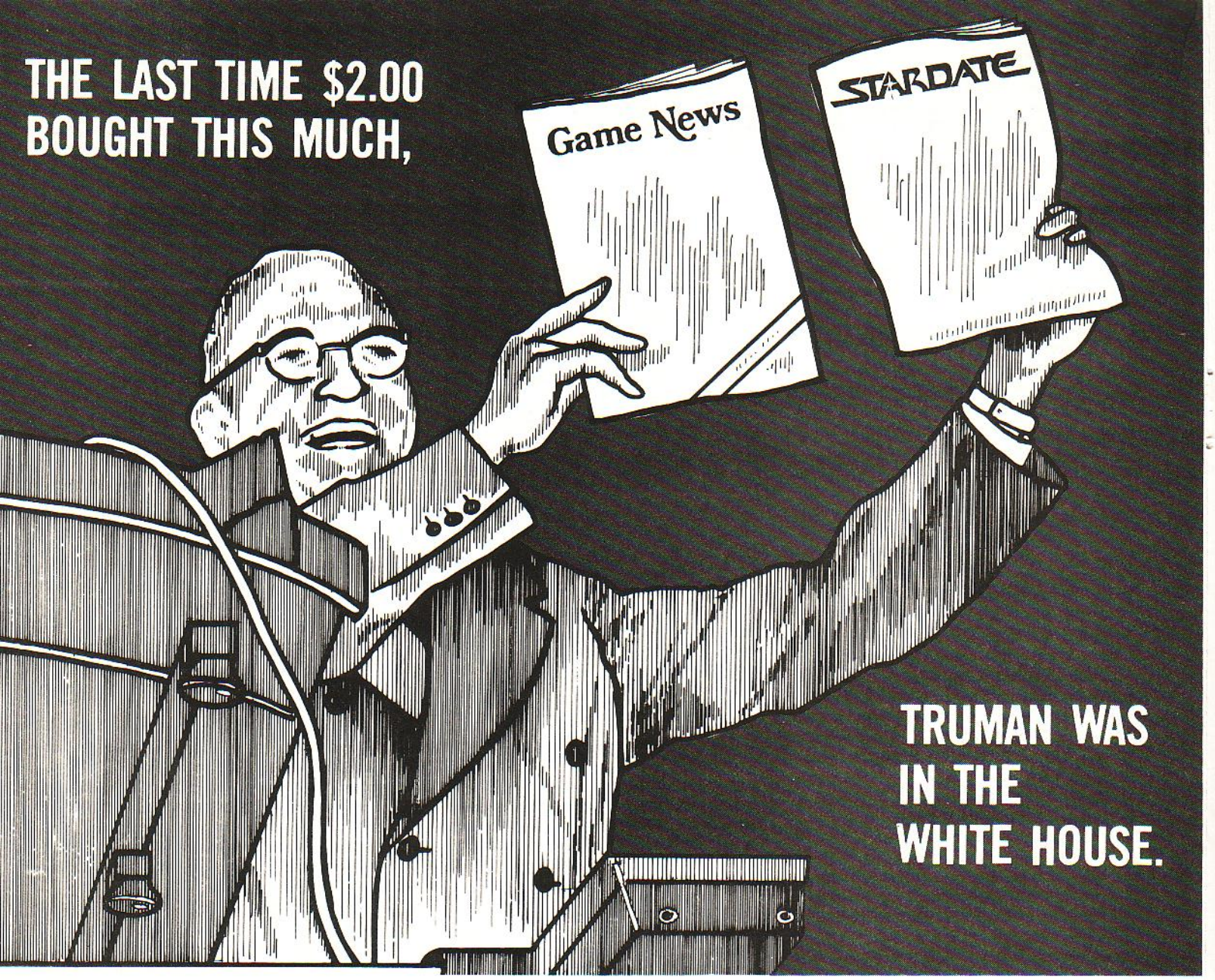
Success rolls. Like *TFT, GURPS* uses six-sided dice. However, *TFT* used variable numbers of dice — from two to seven or more. *GURPS* always uses three dice. To make a task easier or harder, the skill or attribute in question is modified up or down — but always on three dice. Thus, the probability curve retains its bell shape, and "hard" tasks (and high attributes) become more meaningful.

Combat sequencing. *TFT* relied on a two-tier system; each five-second turn had a round of movement, followed by actions (always in DX order). In *GURPS,* turns last only one second, giving more realistic movement. Each character executes movement and action simultaneously, as part of his chosen maneuver. This also speeds play considerably. *GURPS* also abandons the concepts of "engaged" and "disengaged." There is no force-field that prevents you from walking past an armed foe. Of course, if you do, he'll probably try to hit you — so by avoiding an unrealistic restriction, we make combat more fluid.

Weapons effects. In *TFT,* a broadsword is a broadsword, no matter who swings it. In *MTM,* your strength is the most important factor in determining how much damage you do; the type of weapon you have is important, but secondary. And in *MTM* there are three different types of damage — crushing, cutting, and impaling — each with its own special effects.

Death. In *TFT* (as in most games) an unconscious character is very close to death. In *MTM,* as in real life, you can be knocked out and still be in no danger of dying. For instance, if it takes 10 points of damage (the average) to knock you out, it will take at least 10 more points to kill you — and even then, only if you fail your HT roll.

So . . . if you wanted *TFT* all over again, don't buy *Man to Man.* But if you're looking for something new, take a look. I think you'll be pleased.



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The World of HÂRN

Design Notes
by N. Robin Crossby

Harn is a fantasy world play aid, first published by Columbia Games, Inc. in 1983. It is the original creation of N. Robin Crossby, a thirty-one-year-old Anglo-Welshman now residing in Vancouver, Canada. The following comments on his fantasy world are by Mr. Crossby:

I have always been interested in fantasy and actively involved with fantasy roleplaying for the past ten years, mostly as a gamemaster. Inspired by such notable authors as Poul Anderson, Piers Anthony, C.J. Cherryh, Lord Dunsany, Fritz Leiber, Patricia McKillip, Anne McCaffrey, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Roger Zelazny, I have always judged fantasy by its atmosphere. I rarely enjoy a story that depends on magic or scientific marvels at the expense of background, characterization, and plot consistency. Having a natural affinity for cartography and fanaticism about internal consistency, I developed my own FRP world (Nusha) for the enjoyment of my players. This involved many years of research and sweat, but after some false starts, I found that the players in my campaigns soon craved their weekly "fix" of roleplaying in Nusha. Having done all this research and creation, I thought it might be appreciated by others, and designed a world called Harn based on the lessons of Nusha.

The world of Harn may appear to be a familiar, magic-weak and impoverished world. It is, in fact, all of these, and deliberately so. To all jaded Saturday afternoon roleplayers, bored with "monster of the month" campaigns, I can only say the apparent dullness of Harn is an illusion. Harn is exactly the type of world that can make for satisfying and exciting roleplaying.

Harn is "strangely familiar" because a fantasy world should be woven from familiar threads. It is impossible to fully document an entire alien world, so the GM and his players must be able to fill in the gaps with their knowledge of the real world. Designing a fantasy world is almost like telling a huge lie. If it is to be believed, it must contain elements of truth and realism. Clumsily spun gossamer-dreams can easily turn into cobwebs. Where fantasy diverges from reality, the onus is on the designer to justify changes.

For this reason, Harn is a realistic world based on 11th/12th century Britain. My experience with Nusha taught me that this kind of environment was best suited to fantasy roleplaying. Norman Britain was the earliest British culture to leave good records. The existence of profuse data on economics, feudalism, manorialism, and social classes not only gave me ample and reliable sources for Harn, but also enables GMs who use this world to expand their data base and expose their players to sophisticated FRP. Harn reflects the realities of medieval culture and economics, but because of the rich history and social background, player interest is not sacrificed. A character born the son of a slave who rises to become a successful general or advisor to a king is much more interesting to play than a rootless warrior who stumbles across a king's ransom in some dank cave.

Harn is not an exact mirror of early medieval Britain; there is some historical blurring. There are Celtic (and other) variations to allow for magic, the Ivinians can be identified with 9th/10th century Norsemen, and the political framework of the Thardic Republic bears a slight resemblance to Roman Gaul. There are also late-medieval concepts such as powerful guilds and well-organized heraldry. There is a pantheon of ten gods instead of one Christian church. These changes are designed with fantasy roleplaying in mind. They are the direct result of countless hours of fantasy campaigning, and are almost guaranteed to keep a player fully involved and active with his character's lot.

Harn is deliberately "magic-weak" for several reasons. Working magic (as opposed to legends and rumors of magic) does not intrude too often into the lives of Harnians, because the vocation of "wizard" is downplayed. In an FRP game without background, magic in vast quantities may be OK, but in a well-defined social environment, such as Harn, one can get a migraine thinking about the consequences. I find it difficult to imagine a culture that runs on magic. If wizards were to exist in large numbers, they would surely dominate their culture. Why use hard work and technology when there is magic available? If a fantasy world is to be used by characters other than mages, magic should be rare stuff. It is easier to add magic to a campaign than remove it. Once introduced, such things develop a life and inertia of their own, often making removal of unwanted sorcery the cause of a disastrous "domino" effect. With Harn, gamemasters are free to add their favorite spells, demons, wizards, or other magic impedimenta without fear of overloading an already "high magic" environment.

Dragon-bashers may be disappointed with Harn on their first examination; dangerous monsters are rare. The problem with too much "hack-and-slash" adventuring is that players soon come to view dangerous creatures as commonplace. This forces gamemasters to try the band-aid "solution": bigger and more dangerous beasts. These too become "normal," and the escalation goes on until the fantasy world collapses under the weight of its own hit points. Gamemasters are encouraged to add more beasties to Harn, and the existence of the "Ivashu" provides a convenient rationale for doing so. I prefer to keep my "creations" rare, but if a "bring on the creatures" Harn is desired, it is easy to add more . . . and more . . . and more . . . and more.

The Harn concept is flexible; it gives a solid foundation, easily expanded and customized. Some GMs use Harn with little or no modifications, some make additions (subtractions are rarely necessary), and some blend small parts of it into their own campaign world, picking and choosing among Harnic cities, castles, and adventure sites as they wish. There are thousands of parallel Harns, each personalized by the GM using it.

As for the future, kettles are a-simmer. The popularity of ***Harn*** and ***Encyclopedia Harnica***, and the number of topics its readers demand, will keep them around for the foreseeable future. A religious module (***Gods of Harn***) is in the works, and regional modules for Shorkyne, Trierzon, and Azeryan will join the recently published ***Ivinia***. The project has in fact grown to the point where I simply cannot do it all myself. There are now five others involved with the writing and mapping of the Harn universe. There is a natural reluctance on any author's part to allow others to tamper with his creation, but I can happily admit that the world of Harn has benefitted from the diverse views of these talented individuals. □

The New Edition of

Stellar

Review

by Tony Watson

What can one say? This is a classic, one of the very first and still one of the very best sf boardgames ever. Originally published by Metagaming Concepts (the company that inaugurated *Space Gamer*), ***Stellar Conquest*** went out of print when Metagaming went out of business several years ago. Now Avalon Hill has done all sf game players a service by reviving this classic title and making it available once again for those who never had the pleasure of picking it up in one of its earlier manifestations. *SC* is a multi-player (best played by four) strategic game of stellar societies in conflict. The map depicts a portion of a densely-packed globular cluster; the players contend for control of habitable planets to establish colonies that provide a home for their populations, economic production, and supply bases for their fleets. Planets are rated for how Earth-like they are and how many millions of people they can sustain; planet characteristics are determined by drawing from the star card deck. Combat takes place in systems; ships of the opposing fleet are compared, with the number needed to destroy a target depending on the types of ships involved. Conquered planets can be razed or administered. The game has an important (nay, crucial) economic factor; colonies provide the productive capabilities to build new ships, industry, technological innovations, and new colonists in the form of population increases.

This is an excellent game. Avalon Hill has been wise to resist tampering much with the original game design, and although the rules have been rewritten, everything works essentially as before. The strong point of *SC* has always been how it has successfully melded a sound set of rules and a detailed, challenging economic system with an interesting geo-political (or should that be "astro-political"?) situation. Players have to wear many hats in this game: admiral, production minister, and strategic planner (both in a military and economic sense). There are a number of important choices to make in a game with this many facets: who to fight and when, whether to sit back and build up productive capacity or build up a large fleet, go for the expensive technological improvements or rely for a few turns longer on antiquated forces. You must consider strategies for production and colonization that are every bit as important as those for military campaigns, and the game's various systems are adequate to these tasks.

The original design did have one flaw that has been carried over into the new edition: The victory conditions tend to reward those who follow an end-of-the-game land-grab strategy over those who build up large colonies. These work fine, but players may wish to work up their own victory criteria that take more into account than ownership of planets.

As mentioned, changes in the new edition are few. There are some command post markers to mark colonies for supply purposes, which effectively give the colony's location away and can easily be dispensed with. The production record sheet is now backed with a copy of the map, useful for all sorts of notation. Unfortunately, Avalon Hill has managed to botch the artwork for this game. The cover illo is marginal at best, the counters are ugly, and the map is improved only by being mounted. Worse, somebody had the incredibly bad idea of changing the first-edition ship class names of escort, attack, and dreadnought to corvette, fighter, and death star.

In summation, with some very minor changes in terms of play, the new edition of *SC* brings back a true classic in the field of sf boardgames. If you have an older edition, there's no reason to rush out and buy this one (save, perhaps, for the convenience of a mounted map). If the lack of having a copy of the game on hand has prevented you from ever playing *SC*, then you're in luck. Even after a decade, this remains a superb game, a must for every space gamer's shelf. □

STELLAR CONQUEST (The Avalon Hill Game Company); $24. Designed by Howard Thompson. 21½" x 23½" mounted mapboard, 12-page rulebook, four task-force cards, 78 star cards, pad of record sheets, 520 color ½" counters. For two to four players; playing time three to four hours. Revised edition published 1984.

Conquest

Appreciation

by Greg Costikyan

Stellar Conquest is a classic game. The term is one subject to abuse; Avalon Hill insists on calling any game it published before 1968 a "classic," though most of them are turkeys. What I mean is something different. When it was first published, ***Stellar Conquest*** was a seminal design. It was the first commercially successful science fiction boardgame. It was one of the first games to emphasize economics. It was — and is — clean, elegant, and a lot of fun to play.

I bought the Avalon Hill version mostly because I remembered how much fun I had had playing the Metagaming version lo these many years ago (about ten, to be precise: the first edition was published in 1974). I wanted to see what Avalon Hill had done. I was especially interested because Avalon Hill has a habit of butchering games it republishes; both ***Source of the Nile*** and ***Conquistador*** suffered in translation.

I was pleasantly surprised. Avalon Hill has done a fine job in repackaging ***Stellar Conquest***. The map graphics, while simple, are striking; the cards, whose tackiness was one of the great flaws of the original edition, are both attractive and eminently functional; the game counters, while unoriginal, are attractive as well. The simple fact that ***Stellar Conquest*** now *looks* like a game with which some care has been taken increases its appeal.

Graphic improvements can do more than make a game pretty. One improvement which, I think, shows the care Avalon Hill has taken with the game is the economic record sheets, which are now back-printed with a sketch map. During the game, players can record each star's data directly on the sketch map, which means finding the data when you want it much easier.

Avalon Hill did a good job with ***Stellar Conquest*** in another way, too: They had the good sense to let it alone. ***Stellar Conquest*** is a fine game which, despite its age, holds up remarkably well. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that it is an order of magnitude better than most science fiction games published today. A comparison between ***Stellar Conquest*** and, say, ***Battledroids*** or Mayfair's ***Dragonriders of Pern*** makes the latter look sick. ***Stellar Conquest*** is intelligent, serious, and strategically interesting, not mechanical schlock or unimaginative crud carried by a license.

I have a couple of minor questions about Avalon Hill's ***Stellar Conquest***, but they are quibbles only. For example, Avalon Hill has printed the pad of record sheets in light blue, which cannot be photocopied; the intention seems to be to force a buyer to reorder forms from Avalon Hill when he runs out — a rather tacky marketing ploy, it seems to me. The ad copy insists on calling it an "intergalactic battle game," when in fact it takes place in a single, rather small, star cluster, and is on a grand strategic rather than tactical scale. And I am a little annoyed that the credits don't tell me who at Avalon Hill should receive credit for a job well done; games are neither designed nor redeveloped by companies but by people, and I dislike crediting only that faceless entity which, with the jocular friendliness we have come to associate with adventure game companies, insists on being referred to as "The Avalon Hill Game Company." The credits do list Bruce Shelley as one of the playtesters, and as he is on the Avalon Hill design staff and a Personal Friend of the writer, perhaps he deserves some of the credit. Still, it would be nice to know for sure.

Nits deserve to be picked, but however annoying, they are only nits. The important thing is that the new version of ***Stellar Conquest*** is better than the old, which was pretty damn good to begin with. Purchasers of the original edition should seriously consider the new for its superior components, and because, if they are like me, their older games show considerable evidence of wear. Gamers who have never played the game are in for a treat; ***Stellar Conquest*** is, after all, a superb design; a fascinating game; and a seminal contribution to the evolving art of game design. □

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KEEPING POSTED

Two PBM Reviews

Quest of the Great Jewels

by David Ladyman

"The third war of the Great Jewels is over, having ended with the intervention of the Powers-That-Be, but not before most of Zorplia was laid waste and the greater part of the inhabitants destroyed. The P-T-B have sealed the Great Jewels (talismans of immense power) and many of the lesser talismans in the Forbidden Cities and set an enchanted army to guard them, before returning to their endless partying in the Outer Realms. Only scattered remnants of the four peoples remain. Dragons and other terrors roam the land."

With that premise, Zorph Enterprises has produced a highly entertaining, deeply engrossing game for 12 players. My phone bills haven't been this high in a long time! Tactics and strategy are the key to successful play, but even the cagiest player will be at a loss when unsuspectingly faced with one of the more spectacular talismans. As an added plus, newcomers usually have three or four turns to learn game mechanics before they encounter other players.

The four races have produced 12 players in the game, with separate characteristics and objectives specific to each race. The Azoni ("of noble mien but often bald and flat-footed") fight best but move and grow slowly; their objective is to control strongly guarded citadels. The Quntag ("out to get even, after centuries of coming off second best to the Azoni and losing their shirts to the Rilris in all-night poker games") want to control as large an empire as possible. The Rilris ("to them, Shylock was a small time loan shark") seek to hoard as much wealth as possible. And the Slenth ("the baddies, getting their kicks from abacinating evangelists and defenestrating orphans") fight worst but grow rapidly; their goal in life is to maim and destroy — it doesn't much matter against whom or where.

Zorplia is roughly hex-shaped, divided into 255 mountain, forest, and clear hexes. A sea surrounds it, allowing naval movement. Each hex has a levy and tax rate, determining how many troops and zorans that hex produces per turn. These rates vary, depending on which race controls what sort of hex. (Rilris like mountains; Slenth like forests.) Each hex also has a varying percentage chance to produce a new leader each turn.

Not all hexes start out as virgin territory, though. There are several neutral, fortified hexes which hold minor amounts of treasure. There are three or four Mercenary strongholds where troops can be purchased. A few dragons still guard large hoards, and can only be fought in one-on-one combat — any troops taken into a dragon's lair die instantly. And there is the Drevonyx, which can't be fought at all. It eats troops, moving from hex to hex. When it grows large enough, it splits, heading in two different directions. Fortunately, there are three talismans which will teleport it elsewhere. (Maybe right into the heart of your enemy's territory?)

Unfortunately, these three talismans are the Great Jewels, and they are only to be found in three of the ten Forbidden Cities. These cities are strongly fortified citadels, with many defenders and (of course) great treasure. They cannot be attacked, or even spied out, unless you hold one of the key talismans which can unlock that specific city. A Great Jewel is worth the effort, though; each turn it can be used, among other possibilities, to destroy a citadel, change a hex's terrain, or even Geas another player's leader.

Combat is straightforward but not simple, with five different attack options available to each force. Each troop unit has an attack value and a defensive value, based on the option selected by that force. Each leader can have an experience bonus, which adds troop units to his force. Troop strength times attack value, divided by defender's troop strength times its own defensive value, determines how many defending troops are eliminated. Overkill can take out the leader as well. Still, certain victory can turn into a rout, as when the Sword of Doom is brought into play; three times in four, it utterly destroys its target, no matter how great. (The other time, of course, it destroys its wielder!)

Players score in various ways, depending on their character race. Azoni score for each citadel they destroy. Rilris score for each hoard of Zorans they control, and for holding talismans. Quntag score based on the levy and tax rate of each hex they control. And Slenth score for what they kill, and for their leaders' experience bonuses. Azoni and Rilris scoring have a geometric base — having twice as much is worth considerably *more* than double value. Quntag and Slenth scoring have geometric features, but generally, twice as much is worth twice as much.

This usually means that an Azoni or Rilris who has managed to hang in there will have a score that snowballs as the game nears its close, often passing a Quntag who has been the front-runner so far. A good Quntag will be scoring 500 points a turn by the fifth turn, and 1000 points by the tenth. From that point on, most of the territory is owned, and incremental points are much harder to come by. By comparison, an Azoni or Rilris will be lagging behind the Quntag on the fifth turn, scoring about 100 points, but by the fifteenth turn, a good Azoni or Rilris might be scoring 3000 per turn. According to the latest ruling, new games will last five to ten turns longer, which looks to set Quntag at a decided disadvantage. Slenth suffers the disadvantage of having a relatively small guaranteed point base. To consistently score high points each turn, they must be continually attacking. I missed three turns as a Rilris, but you couldn't tell it from my scores those turns. A missed Slenth turn, especially in end-game, would be devastating. This racial play balance seems to be the biggest drawback to *QotGJ*.

A second problem is that the rulebook, while complete, is not thoroughly organized or indexed. There are a few other specific problems as well, mainly with the combat system. If you have one long garrison or leader and 100 troops, against seven leaders, each with five to ten troops, you can only attack one of these leaders. (If all of the enemy attack you, you do get automatic "defensive" fire against the six leaders you didn't attack normally.) If 20 enemy troops are in the same hex as your six-troop garrison, it is besieged, and cannot produce or engage in transfers, even if you have 500 troops and five leaders in the same hex. Somehow, those 20 troops are keeping you from communicating with your garrison. Similarly, if your six garrison troops are eliminated, the hex becomes unowned, even though you still have 500 troops present. And finally, leaders can't fight and move in the same turn. Even with overwhelming odds, it takes any one leader ten turns to capture five hexes. This tends to slow the game down, but, on the other hand, it's hard for someone to hit-and-run against you. If he takes out your garrison this turn, you'll know you can find him there next turn.

The folks at Zorph Enterprises do have four very important plusses going for them. First, they don't taken themselves too seriously, as witnessed by their racial descriptions, above. Second, if they make an error while inputting your turn, they will go beyond reasonable lengths to correct it. Third, they

are fairly prompt with turnaround. And fourth, they are responsive to player input. There have been two or three rule changes made while I've been playing, and more are on the way. (I have been told that the siege and capture rules I mentioned above will be reconsidered.) I was disappointed to encounter only three of my 11 opponents in my first *QotGJ* game; in subsequent games, there will be tunnels across the map opening and closing randomly, giving you access to more of your opponents. It is hoped that they can improve the rulebook while updating it.

QotGJ is normally a 12-player game with about 20-day turnaround. However, variations are possible. My favorite is played with four three-player teams. Overseas players are accommodated with longer turnaround games, and bitter-end games (played until one player controls half the board) and no-communication games are also available. You can even play against the designer, who, of course, plays a Slenth and starts the game twice as strong as everyone else. That game ends when the designer is eliminated.

On balance, let me give an enthusiastic endorsement to ***Quest of the Great Jewels*** and to Zorph Enterprises. Their game entertains without annoying, and there aren't many games, especially by mail, of which that can be said.

QUEST OF THE GREAT JEWELS (Zorph Enterprises, 3646 Gibsonia Rd., Gibsonia, PA 15044). Set-up fee $2.50 (refundable on completing game); turns 1-10, $2.50; 11-20, $3; 21+, $3.50; rulebook, $2.50. No extra fees. Computer-moderated; turnaround three weeks. □

Infinite Conflict

by Jim Gould

In ***Infinite Conflict***, each player chooses a racial type (human, insectoid, reptilian, etc.) and starts with one large-size fully-outfitted homeworld somewhere in a 19 by 19 sector area. From that point, the player must explore the Quadrant, gain technology and colonies, and defeat his or her adversaries.

The player controls three fleets, and the actions of these fleets comprise the turn. Each fleet may be any size, but all ships must be in fleets; no ships may be left to guard planets. At the start of the game, fleets are limited to moving one sector per turn, but this is rapidly augmented by increasing technology. The three-fleet limit is central to the flow of the game, as even the most powerful of players can only be three places at once. Each fleet may have a Command Ship, a very large and powerful vessel which the player can name.

In addition to movement, the player may also allocate his accumulated money (in Galactic Credit Units) to production. There is no limit to how much may be produced at an industrialized planet; you can send an industrial Pod to your farthest planet and spend the last 10 turns' accumulated GCU there next turn. A number of different ships and troop types are available, each with its own special use. Most are poor combat buys, so you tend to get fleets of a bunch of Starfighters and Dreadnoughts with one lone Light Cruiser and his friend the Heavy Cruiser. Troops are hauled by Transports, Battleships repair damage, etc. A variety of defensive items may be constructed at industrialized colonies if the player has the technology.

Production takes one side of the turnsheet; movement and short orders fill the other. You may submit one full page of other instructions if you can think of that much to do with just three fleets.

As you explore, you encounter planets that may be colonizable, or that may have valuable resources, or even an outpost of one of the two incredibly powerful NPC races. Another common encounter is the standard "derelict in space" which yields some morsel of advanced technology.

Technology greatly affects the game, as it directly increases production in addition to allowing new unit types and a variety of offensive and defensive weaponry. Prior knowledge of the game is an immense asset here, since no indication is given in the rules of what to expect from new technology. It is easy to deduce that there are higher Hyper (movement) speeds, but what is the highest? How big can space stations get? How many Cyborgs can dance on the head of a Starfighter?

The racial types are essentially identical, and have no effect on play except when you meet neutral planets or opposing players. Each type is compatible with itself and two others, neutral to two, and incompatible with two. Compatible neutral planets will allow colonization freely; neutrals will demand payment or services; incompatible races will fight to the death to prevent you from landing. A special type of unit (the Diplomatic Unit) is essential to negotiation. In practice, it seems pretty meaningless, as each fleet will carry at least one, and they're very cheap.

Friendly or neutral racial types of players may interact, ally, and trade technology freely, but if two players of hostile racial types meet, combat is mandatory. This leads to some rather embarrassing incidents if a neighbor of yours just happens to be incompatible. Somehow the smell leaks through the ether, and off you go. For my money, this is a pretty poor way to incite opponents. I prefer to pick my own allies and enemies, thank you. Actually, operating in concert with an incompatible but friendly player is not too difficult; thus the incompatibility rules are merely annoying, rather than constricting.

The NPC races, the Aeolic Guardians and the Quasi-Maximus, appear occasionally and are essentially unbeatable without overwhelming firepower. The Aeolic Guardians tend to dispense quests; the Quasi-Maximus aren't nearly so nice.

Combat is simple; each side takes 50% of the other's combat strength as losses in damage factors. Various ship types have different weapon/shield classes (from Ultra-Light to Xtra-Heavy) that may render some ships immune to lighter weaponry. From my experience, they make very little difference in play. Ground troops and planet-based defenses are also classified by this system, and ground combat follows the ship combat rules. Combats tend to be decisive, although I have heard of combat survivors retreating. Ships take damage in a fixed order, so you can't use tactics to safeguard your Transports, or place your Dreadnoughts in the front line.

This game is pretty obviously still in the formative stages. Moderation is done by hand, although computer moderation is promised. Rules change occasionally, mistakes crop up frequently, and you really need to have someone who's played the game already clue you in on the tricks. Far too often I felt that I was playing blindfolded in a knowledge vacuum. The rulebook is not particularly clear and complete; I had to find out about mining CX class planets and moons from another player, in addition to finding out just what a CX class is! In addition, the game I entered had already been in progress for quite some time. The "oldest" players tended to have an overwhelming advantage. Lesson learned: Get in on the ground floor, i.e., when a new Quadrant opens.

The one-week turnaround restricts this game to the dedictated PBMer. Missing a turn can be decisive. Phoned-in turns are relatively common, although this may be restricted; phone policy is certainly never mentioned in the rulebook. For that matter, turnaround time and scheduled turn processing aren't covered either.

Infinite Conflict is very definitely a combat-oriented game. All the actions in the game are designed to accumulate more tech and GCU so you can get a bigger, better fleet and cream those Commie Insectoids before they get you. If that's the kind of game you like, ***Infinite Conflict*** is for you. Despite its flaws, it is quite a bit of fun to play. You'd better have some steady income, though. Five bucks a turn four times a month can make a pauper of you rather fast. For a one-sheet reply in a game where the types of encounters are very limited, that's very steep.

If you are tired of long turnaround time and want a good, simple shoot-'em-up space game, ***Infinite Conflict*** may well be your cup of tea. If you're more frugal or patient, or if you like knowing everything about a game before playing it, you shouldn't touch it.

INFINITE CONFLICT (Gemini Systems, Inc., P.O. Box 558207, Miami, FL 33255-8207); $5/turn. Strategic/tactical space warfare PBM. Human-moderated. Turns processed weekly. □

Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson

Things are going pretty well, everything considered. We just got back from Gen Con (our best convention *ever* in terms of sales, and a lot of fun). The new office computers are working as well as could be expected. And, as I write this, everybody is working hard to make our last issue of *Space Gamer* a good one.

Our last WHAT?

Well, if you haven't already read Warren's *Counter Intelligence* in this issue (page 2), you really ought to turn back and look at it. We've sold *Space Gamer*. We'll still be heavily involved — but SJ Games won't be the publisher any longer. Giving up *SG* is definitely traumatic . . . but it gives us the time to do lots of other things, especially

New GURPS Stuff

Those who have been watching me struggle with *GURPS* will be pleased to hear that ***Man to Man***, the combat game, *did* get finished. Finally. We released it at Gen Con, to loud cheers, and the first question everybody asked was "When will there be supplements?" Real soon now. To wit —

Warren Spector is almost finished with his ***Orcslayer***, a roleplaying adventure in which you'll fight your way through brigands, orcs, and a host of other nasties in order to relieve a besieged castle and . . . never mind, I don't want to give it all away. It will be out before Christmas.

I'm hard at work on my high-tech weapons supplement (currently called ***High Tech*** — how's that for originality?). It will include black powder, gunpowder, and futuristic weapons. There may be a couple of scenarios if I have room. I want to finish this one by early 1986.

And we have a *bunch* of other things on the burner. See my design article, elsewhere in this issue, for more possibilities.

CAR WARS

This continues to be our top seller. The Deluxe Edition, released at Origins, went out of print in *three weeks* due to incredibly-much-higher-than-expected demand. And if we don't hurry up and reprint boxes, we'll run out *again*. ***Car Wars*** Expansion 7 (off-road) was released at Gen Con; CWX8 (helicopters and more off-road) will be out by Christmas. There will be a *lot* more ***Car Wars*** stuff out in 1986, too.

We *will* continue to publish ***Autoduel Quarterly***. With a circulation of some 12,000 (and still rising), we'd be crazy not to! But the magazine will *remain* quarterly for the foreseeable future. Although there have been lots of requests for more frequency, we don't want to get back into a situation where magazines — even *good* magazines — crowd out our game work.

We have a "handshake" agreement to license a new — and much better-looking — line of ***Car Wars*** miniatures. The casting company doesn't want to sign a license until we approve sample sculptures — which strikes me as a good attitude — so I won't mention any names yet. We're also talking with several other companies about assorted ***Car Wars*** licenses. Cross your fingers.

Computers

OSI's computerized version of ***Car Wars***, called ***Autoduel, IS*** making progress. It may be out by the time you read this. Then again . . . maybe not. Documentation has been drafted (and is getting better). The game is written and playable; emphasis now is on improving speed and getting rid of those last few little bugs.

As for OSI's Apple II version of ***Ogre***, it's on hold right now while they finish their ***Ultima IV*** game. Progress has been OK, but the "artificial intelligence" that controls the computer opponent needs to be *good* — so don't look for this before December.

And OSI is in the beginning stages of a computer version of ***Undead***. That was a good game — but *not* a big seller — it moved too slowly. Part of the reason it was slow is that it was originally *designed* as a computer game . . . when the deal fell through, we found a way to manipulate chits and make it a boardgame. But as a computer game, it'll be much faster-moving and more fun. But it will probably be a year or so before that one is ready for release.

As for the play-by-mail games from Adventure Systems: ***PBM Illuminati*** is going great guns. The game I'm in is *almost* over. I think I have third sewed up, but I'm indulging in a little wanton destruction first. As for ***PBM Car Wars*** — progress has not been speedy. Again, it's an artificial-intelligence problem — the program routines that handle arena combat have to be devilishly complex. I saw some very impressive combat plots at Origins — but apparently the game is a long ways away from playtest. Pity, that.

Et Cetera

Killer is coming back, finally. It went to press before this magazine did, so you should have it in stores now. The new edition has eight added pages. It's also got a new cover, so it'll be easy to spot. Check it out.

We are working on *two* new ***TOON*** supplements. ***Son of TOON***, by Allen Varney, will feature lots of new rules and shticks, the "cartoon series," and crazy cartoony things and locations. ***Silly Stuff*** will be a staff effort under the guidance of the mad Mr. Spector. The title says it all . . . New Random Thingie Tables. Places to go, people to meet, and things to do. A whole book of insane suggestions and unnatural resources for the Animator. Silly stuff!

And ***Ogre*** fans should not despair. Well, maybe you should despair a little bit. I have several good submissions for ***Ogre*** stuff on my desk. They've been there for quite a while already. Maybe one day I'll actually be able to get to them.

Last Paragraph

I've enjoyed writing this column for the past few years. It's a great way to tell you folks what we're up to! While I expect to be writing for *Space Gamer*, it probably won't be a page of company news in every issue.

For those who want to keep in touch with SJG, I'd advise four things:

(1) Keep up with *VIP of Gaming* and any other game magazines you enjoy — that's a good way to get news, not only about us, but about the rest of the hobby.

(2) If you enjoy ***Car Wars***, check out *Autoduel Quarterly*. 'Nuff said.

(3) If you like roleplaying games — especially if you're one of those who has been waiting faithfully for ***GURPS*** — check out ***Man to Man***. Included with each game is a questionnaire. Anybody who fills out the questionnaire will be on our mailing list for a *free* "house organ" newsletter covering ***GURPS***.

(4) Come to conventions! It's the best chance to meet our whole crew, and to get your news (and deliver your comments) in person.

I'll be seeing you. □

Capsule Reviews

GAMES

STAR TREK: THE ADVENTURE GAME (West End Games); $16. Designed by Greg Costikyan and Doug Kaufman. 22" x 17" mounted mapboard, 40 planet disks, 64 counters, three status display cards, 8-page rules booklet, 60-page adventure booklet, two dice. For one or two players; playing time 90 minutes to two hours. Published 1985.

This is the latest game based on the *Star Trek* television series, and one of the best. The setting is the Organian Treaty Zone, a band of unexplored worlds separating the Federation and the Klingon Empire. The powerful Organians have forbidden conflict in the area, so the two sides are forced to rely on peaceful forms of competition for influence. The two players each have a handful of cruisers and a starship, as well as the all-important cast of commissioned officers, each with one or more skills (Kirk and Spock, as one might expect, are the most proficient), and a number of security officers (you know, the guys in the red shirts with the bullseyes on them that go down to the surface and get killed so Kirk *et al.* will notice that something's amiss). The game system is elegantly simple, using paragraphs to control and describe the action. Starships move to an unexplored system, a planet disk is drawn, and the corresponding description for that world is read. Usually a die roll is made to determine the main branch the adventure will take; from there on, player choices, affected by the side being played and the skills of characters present, determine which paragraphs to consult and the eventual resolution of the adventure. There are also rules for random events and Federation High Commissioners and Klingon Agents, both of which are two-edged swords for the players.

There's a great deal to like about this game. It's simple and flows well, yet retains choice and challenge; the paragraph system is excellent for this type of game. Best of all, *Star Trek* seems to capture the essence of the series: The *Enterprise* and crew (or equivalent) come upon some interesting situation and have to use their smarts and skills, as well as their phasers, to solve things. Spock's logic or Kirk's charisma may be just the ticket needed to rid the galaxy of yet another peril. The emphasis here seems to be on recreating the sorts of situations found in the old television episodes, an eminently desirable goal for such a game. In fact, the game uses a number of the plots from the TV show, so that the players can compare their own handling of the situation with that of the TV heroes. A good knowledge of the shows may be useful, but can also lead to failure, since the plots have been given twists in some places and following the TV show solution may not be the best course. The physical quality of the game is excellent, although the planet counters are a mite too colorful for my tastes. The game is perfect for solitaire play.

Problems with the game are few. There is an inherent limitation to the number of times the game can be played because of the use of the paragraph system, but the game is versatile enough that this shouldn't show up for quite a few plays. Some buyers may be disappointed in the lack of player interaction (i.e., there are no combat rules); there's not a great deal players can do to one another to affect the outcome of the game. However, that doesn't seem to be a major problem during play.

If you like *Star Trek*, you should get this game. The spirit of the show is captured admirably; all that seeking out of new worlds and civilizations is right there. This is not the game that FGU's ***Star Explorer*** (based on a pale imitation of the "Trek" universe) tried to be, and it's much closer to the series than those "armadas in space" titles put out by Task Force. This game is entertaining, simple, colorful and a lot of fun . . . not much different from the television series it's based on.

—Tony Watson

ADVANCED CASSIOPEIAN EMPIRE (Norton Games, Box 5261, Colorado Springs, CO); $18.99. Designed by Raymond Norton, Ray Moats, and James Gowan. Sf roleplaying game. 28-page 8½" x 11" typewritten Players Handbook, 33-page Gamemaster Handbook, 20-page History folder, 20 character sheets, 25 GM record sheets. For referee and any number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

This amateurish RPG of "space fantasy" postulates a feudal interstellar empire in 2585. The background is apparently an alternate history where the FTL drive was perfected in 1951 and an empire was in full swing by the time of the Carter Administration. The typewritten rules give character creation (lots of attributes rolled on 1D20, classes and levels, skills acquired in *Traveller* fashion), combat procedure (simpleminded D20 rolls on the *D&D*-style chart), equipment and spacecraft lists, and sketchy summaries of the 20 worlds of the Empire. Robot construction rules occupy 11 lines. Organization of the military police is followed immediately by effects of alcohol and poison, which are followed by general cargo tables. And let's not forget the ninja character class.

There's so much wrong with this game that I can't even find the parts that are right . . . assuming there are any. Such searching doesn't seem worth the effort.

—Allen Varney

WABBIT WAMPAGE (Pacesetter); $15. Designed by Mark D. Acres. Four-piece game mapboard, 48 game cards, 70 counters, two 10-sided dice, boxed. For two to four players; playing time two to three hours. Published 1985.

The local varmints, the Wabbits, wage war on the local farmer and each other for control of the carrot crop, for control of the farm buildings, and for the opportunity to commit mayhem. In a murderously silly game, inspired, no doubt, by ***TOON*** and countless Bugs Bunny and Heckle & Jeckle cartoons, the forces of wabbit and man fight through a whole year. Starting in the Spring, the opposing forces vie for the ability to plow the fields, harvest the carrots, destroy or defend the farm buildings, and generally go around "whomping" each other. (In *TOON*, you "Fall Down." In ***Wabbit Wampage***, you get "whomped.") With three characters per side, the combatants run around pillaging and pummelling, simulated by an easy and effective combat and movement system. Players might have a little trouble with the use of the game cards in interactive play, but, as in the ***Judge Dredd*** game, the cards provide the bulk of player interaction; they're used to aid in your attacks or defend against enemy attacks (in some cases "whomping" your attacker before he "whomps" you). Other cards grant more movement or allies to your side. The Mail-Order cards take a little more planning to use: You have to have a live character at the mailbox to send off for the items, and you have to be there to grab them when they show up next turn, or somebody else may get them! Remember the famous "Acme" company, where Wile E. Coyote had an unlimited charge account? Well, the same company is doing business in ***Wabbit Wampage***, selling TNT, wrecking cranes, Killer Robots, and the ever-popular H-bomb. Although strategy is touted as being important on the back of the box, the game soon devolves into a senseless frenzy of running around, mailing, and "whomping." Think of the lunacy of any old Looney Tunes cartoon, and lengthen it into a game.

Wabbit Wampage is most notable for its use of cards; the heretofore-ignored mail-order shtick, which I have observed in so many cartoons — I was surprised that this was not one of the shticks in *TOON (EDITOR'S NOTE: In TOON, "Instant Mail" is a Cartoony Thing, not a shtick; anyone can use it)*; and the 10-sided dice, of the usual Pacesetter quality: excellent. I like the mental picture of Farmer Brown arming the old bulldog with a chainsaw and sending him out to grease some wabbits!

Once I played the game, a thought came to mind: They want $15 for *this?* The jigsaw puzzle gameboard was warped, creating a minor problem with the scoring track, but the biggest failure was the ambiguity of certain rules: How many times may the fields be plowed? During the harvest, how many carrot counters can a character carry, and does this interfere with carrying weapons? Are points scored for carrot-hoarding every summer month? And (*very* important) how many times can a character be "whomped" in a turn, for the attendant point value? These questions remain unanswered in the rules. Another case, I suspect, of insufficient blind playtesting.

Wabbit Wampage is not worth $15. It's a cute idea, and the mail-order shtick is worthy of ***TOON***, but that's all. Furthermore, ***Wabbit Wampage*** isn't in the same class as ***Star Ace*** or ***Chill***, and doesn't belong on the same shelves. It belongs in the same category as ***Monopoly***, ***Risk***, and ***Candyland***.

—Craig Sheeley

CHILL BLACK MORN MANOR (Pacesetter Ltd.); $15. Designed by Troy Denning. Four-page rules folder, 48 2"-square board tiles, 96 cards, 60 willpower chips, ten item counters, six colored pawns, two 10-sided dice, boxed. For two to six players; playing time approximately one hour. Published 1985.

Pacesetter's first venture into the area of boardgames just happens to be a derivation of their first roleplaying game, ***Chill***. And considering the limitations of the genre, ***Black Morn Manor*** is a pretty good horror boardgame. The game changes every time, for you build the board as you play, and one of ten different creatures can be met in each game (and in some cases *two* beasties will have to be contended with). One player is the Minion (henchman) of the "Master" (the monster), and all other players are the Envoys (good guys). In the course of the game the players may involuntarily switch sides, usually due to the play of certain cards. All players are trying to find the "Influence Item" to which the Master of the house is vulnerable; the Minion(s) must leave the board with it to win — there's only

one way off — while the Envoys have to take it to the Master's favorite haunt and (usually) combat him there.

The game plays like a very much simplified version of the ***Chill*** RPG. Some of the cards in fact are labelled "Evil Way" and duplicate the effects of their counterparts in the RPG. Also paralleling the ***Chill*** RPG is the Envoys' Willpower rating, which goes up and down between 1 and 10 according to movement, card play, and combat. If Willpower reaches 0, the Envoy becomes a Minion. Combat is, uh, devilishly simple; a single D10 roll for each side, along with bonuses added for items, Willpower, and tile number, determines the winner. The build-it-as-you-move-on-it gameboard is another nice touch, making for very different combinations of rooms each time the game is played and nicely simulating the characters' wandering about a strange haunted house. The monsters include a Ghost, a Zombie Master, a Vampire, a Bat Lord, and many others; again, this brings variety to the game. The components are first-rate, with sturdy tiles and some fine color artwork on the cards.

The drawbacks, however, are big ones. The side-changing can get way out of hand, especially when there are "Ghostly Lights" cards in play — these little beauties make their drawer immediately take five *more* cards in succession, taking the effect of all five. A possible solution to this might be to remove one of these cards if there are two in play. And some of the Masters do not have to be defeated in combat; all the Envoys have to do is take the Influence Item to His favorite haunt and He's done. Power-gamers will hate the fact that when one Envoy wins it counts as a victory for all of them, while Minions are allowed to win individually. A warning: this game is *simple*, and apparently aimed at a pretty young crowd. If you want lots of rules look elsewhere.

This is a tough genre to work in, especially in the area of boardgames (at present there are very few — ***Dark Cults, Nightmare House,*** and ***Undead*** are the only ones I'm aware of). Pacesetter has done a pretty reasonable job with ***Black Morn Manor***, and so far it appears to be the best of the horror boardgames.

—Kevin Ross

THE WATERSDOWN AFFAIR (Decipher, Box 1548, Norfolk, VA 23501); $26.50. Designed by "How to Host a Murder." Host's Guide, eight Clue Manuals, five extra Clues, Scotland Yard Report cassette, Scotland Yard Report written summary, map of Watersdown Mansion, and eight invitations. For eight players; playing time two and a half to four hours. Published 1984.

You have been invited to spend the weekend at the country estate of beverage magnate Sir Roger Watersdown. The weekend has been anything but smooth; Sir Roger seems to have had some sort of quarrel with almost all of his guests. And now, just as you're waiting in the drawing room for Sir Roger to arrive for dinner, you receive something of a shock: an inspector from Scotland Yard arrives with some rather bad news about Sir Roger . . .

The Watersdown Affair can be best described as a participatory parlor mystery. Eight people are thrown together, all of whom had some reason to kill their host. Which one of them had the means and the opportunity? Will they be able to figure out who did it? Or will the killer be clever enough to outwit them?

Each player has a Clue Manual containing four rounds of clues. At the beginning of the game the players read the rules of the game and introduce themselves in character; then they read the first round of clues. There are two types of clues: incriminating evidence ("Well, I saw Randy in Sir Roger's bedroom last night. I don't know what they were arguing about, but it was quite a row!") and alibis ("Of course I went up to Sir Roger's room at 2:30, but I heard voices in there, so I came right back down again.") The players present the evidence, explain their doings, discuss the evidence, and go on to the next clue. When all the clues for one round have been discussed, the players go on to the next round of clues. When all four rounds are complete, the players tell who they think did it and why. And finally, justice is done as the suspects are, ah, eliminated one by one until we find out who the murderer is. There are no "winners" or "losers"; the object is low-press roleplaying fun.

Playing ***The Watersdown Affair*** couldn't be simpler. The Host's Guide explains the game clearly and well, telling the would-be host how to set up the game, what to provide, and suggesting costumes for the participants. It even gives menu suggestions, with a recipe for Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding for Eight Suspects. (A dinner is not necessary, but it certainly helps to set the atmosphere and makes the game much more fun.) The game is simple enough that once it starts there should be no problems, and interesting enough to hold the players' attention. After all, the players are fighting for their vicarious lives!

There are a few minor problems. It is anachronistic and a bit jarring to see Sir Roger's private secretary style herself as "Ms.", a term which until thirty years after the ***Affair*** meant only "manuscript." (In context this makes perfect sense, but it's pretty jarring all the same.) Also, one of the rules of the game is that none of the players can lie about the clues. This is a reasonable and simple rule, but it does present a problem for the players who have checkered pasts (that is, all of them) who might not want to admit to, for instance, a previous murder when an Inspector from Scotland Yard is standing in the room.

The Affair is designed for eight players, and cannot be played with less. The rules also allow for more players by stating that other guests can join in and ask questions, but they will have no clues. We ended up with 15 people at various times; other than running out of chairs and putting on a second roast; we had no problems.

And the verdict? I cannot recommend this game highly enough. If your dinner parties are becoming a bit dull, or if you and seven or more of your friends want to have a great time one evening, buy ***The Watersdown Affair.***

—Creede Lambard

SUPREMACY (Supremacy Games); $38. No designer credited. 30" x 21" mounted gameboard, approximately 350 plastic playing tokens, 64 playing cards, play money, six cardstock supply centers, rules folder and sheet of optional rules, four dice, molded storage trays to hold everything, boxed. For two to six players; playing time two to three hours. Published 1984.

Supremacy is a big, fancy (for 38 bucks, it oughta be fancy) boardgame that attempts to portray global competition between six superpowers (the US, USSR, and PRC, of course, along with a united Europe, an African federation, and a South America confederacy). This game is essentially "***Risk*** meets nukes," with a little bit of economics thrown in. Players can build armies and navies and maneuver them over 53 land areas and 39 sea areas in order to control the world. Nukes and "L-stars" (laser anti-missile satellites) can be used in strategic warfare. Combat is a simple variant on the ***Risk*** system; players determine how many dice they can throw, toss them, divide by three, and eliminate that many opposing units. Certain areas produce commodities which are used to build new units, move pieces, or sold to raise cash.

The components are really nice: plastic squares and oblongs for armies and fleets, professional quality cards for the resource areas, a really beautiful board, and — the *piece de resistance* — little black plastic mushroom clouds to place on territories you have nuked. (It's every gamer's delight to announce "You shouldn't have done that" to an opponent and start plopping down the mushroom clouds on his territories.) There are some good aspects to the design: Economics and production are important and give the game the potential for non-military competition; the combat system for conventional warfare works well; and the nuclear option provokes an underlying trepidation that is surprisingly realistic. The whole idea of designing an updated ***Risk*** is very good.

Weak points abound, unfortunately (and I really wanted to like this game). ***Supremacy*** is like a headless giant; it looks impressive, but it lacks proper direction. The rules are written in parlor-game style and are pretty bad: basic questions, such as how many areas a player can attack in his turn, or what to do with superpower countries when less than six play, aren't covered. Worst of all, the economic system, which gave this game the chance to rise a bit above the "set 'em up and let's start fighting" of ***Risk***, is badly imbalanced. There's too much money, and too many resources — players have no impetus to expand, and the price for commodities soon falls to rock bottom, since no one is buying them to keep the price high. The result is not unlike a worldwide depression, which isn't what the designers were trying to portray. The price is too high, but I put some of that down to the high-quality components and the fact that this is a Canadian import; nevertheless, for almost forty dollars, the buyer should get rules that work.

Supremacy really has some potential as a fun, competitive beer-and-pretzels game on par with the recent Milton Bradley releases like ***Axis & Allies***. If you're willing to rework some of the rules (which I eventually did), it may realize that potential. But as it stands now, its beautiful components are badly hobbled by an inadequate set of rules. Sadly, I can't recommend this one.

—Tony Watson

STAR TREK III STARSHIP COMBAT GAME (FASA); $15. No designer credited. Two 8-page rulebooks, one 24-page rulebook, 16-page ship data book, combat chart book, 22" x 33" map, 190 counters, 20-sided die, boxed. For two to 15 players; playing time one to three hours. Published 1984.

The ***Star Trek III Starship Combat Game*** is, as the blurb on the box claims, four games in one. Ranging in complexity from basic to expert and Command and Control levels, the game allows players to take command of their favorite ships from the *Star Trek* show and movies and engage in deadly battle. Depending on the level played, players move counters on control sheets or fill out allocations to power deflectors, weapons, and movement. Then the ships are moved using a "phase" system similar to the one in ***Star Fleet Battles*** (but much simpler), firing during the pauses between phases. Captains must choose among the power demands, restricting maneuverability, or leaving weapons and deflectors underpowered or unpowered. However much like a simple wargame it may sound, though, this game has a unique level of play called "Command and Control." Primarily a roleplaying tool for FASA's ***Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game***, this level lets multiple players take the roles and duties of the officers on one ship — up to seven players per ship! This level is a challenge to play, requiring a great deal of cooperation among the "crew."

The game meshes perfectly with the FASA ***ST: RPG*** system, providing a play aid for characters in starship battles and using the ship statistics from the system introduced in the ***Starship Construction Manual***. Using the manual, you can even construct your own ships for combat, something not possible

in the market competitor, ***Star Fleet Battles***. But even on its own, ***Star Trek III Starship Combat Game*** is pleasing: It is easy to learn, easy to play, features swift action (particularly the basic and advanced levels), and it's definitely *Star Trek* — no imagined histories or unfamiliar technologies. The counters deserve special mention: They're beautiful depictions of planets, mine explosions, asteroids, and ships, all in gorgeous color and an inch across. True works of art!

I could have lived with *identification* on the counters; as is, it's almost impossible to differentiate between ships of the same class. (And where are the Tholians? I couldn't even find mention of them!) The board could have used hex numbers, too: Cloaked vessels are left off the board, and the controlling players keep track of them. This makes the cloaking device very effective: Often it's impossible for a cloaked ship to be found — even by the player running it! Turning to the rules, I found one bad typo, in the area on reversing engines and running backwards; I still don't know how to do this, because part of that section was never printed. At least what there was on reversing was logical; the section on warp speed was *not*. Warp speed confers only disadvantages in this game: A ship moving ten hexes at Warp 12 and a ship moving ten hexes at sub-light are totally equal in every way but one, which is that the faster ship is more likely to suffer damage if it turns too sharply. The situation makes no sense; here, warp speed is not desirable at all, and that seems to be contrary to the show and the movies. Finally, even though the game tries to be like the combat on the screen, the damage done by the weapons and the relative weakness of the deflectors (here, deflectors don't slowly give out, they're smashed to bits instantly) defeat the effort. Ships die too quickly, making this the bloodiest space combat game I've ever encountered.

Star Trek III Starship Combat Game is a noble effort, containing elements that would have been welcome in ***Star Fleet Battles***, but I don't think FASA will draw much of Task Force Games' market away. This game is a good one for Trekkies who don't care for the intricacies of ***Star Fleet Battles***, gamers who want the novelty of playing the crew in the Command and Control level, or players of ***ST: RPG***.

—Craig Sheeley

TIME AND TIME AGAIN (Timeline, Ltd.); $18. Designed by H.N. Voss and W.P. Worzel. 52-page rulebook, 48-page backgrounds book, two 4-page charts and tables folders, three 4-page scenarios, boxed. For GM and several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Timeline, Ltd., publisher of ***The Morrow Project,*** has become the third to enter the field of time-travel RPGs with ***Time and Time Again*** (abbreviated T^2). As could be expected from the ***TMP*** crew, T^2 takes a more "realistic" approach to time travel than its predecessors; where Pacesetter's ***Timemaster*** is more science-fantasy and Yaquinto's ***Timeship*** is almost pure fantasy, T^2 falls more solidly into the realm of sf. The game postulates a 21st century in which a World Government protects the secrets of time travel through the Bureau of Temporal Affairs (BTA), the core of which was formed from the old French Foreign Legion — tough veterans who protect the academics who travel back in time to view history. Game mechanics are relatively simple, while retaining a great deal of realism — sort of a cross between ***The Morrow Project*** and Chaosium's ***Basic Role-Playing*** system. Six characteristics — strength, constitution, dexterity, intelligence, attitude, and luck — range from 3-18; damage is taken on structure and blood points; skills have base percentages that may be increased through attribute points, training, or experience. Skill and combat rolls, however, are made using a D*200* rather than the usual percentile dice. In most cases, however, the game's emphasis is on roleplaying rather than on mechanics.

To this end, a lot of attention is given to the history of the world government, time travel and its backgrounds and procedures, etc. In fact, the first 26 pages of Book I, plus parts of Book II, are devoted to this background (as opposed to only a few pages of similar material in ***Timemaster***). This really gives a GM a feel for the base time of T^2 and aids in running both player-characters and NPC time travellers through scenarios. And while the "laws" of time travel are more restrictive than in ***Timemaster*** (the past can't be changed; historical persons can't be removed from their own time; metal can't be taken back), this approach does make the GM's job a bit easier, since he doesn't have to worry about paradoxes and so on. The "generalist" approach of the background book, too, gives a GM a helpful overview of various aspects of running scenarios — notes on climate, transportation, technology, politics, and other aspects of culture.

On the other hand, as specific background info on various historical eras *isn't* provided, the GM is going to have to do a lot of research in setting up scenarios in specific time periods. T^2's background info can give him the guidelines, but he'll have to fill in the details. A few more specifics here would have been helpful, though the three mini-scenarios do give some data (history, encounters, etc.) on ancient Egypt, war-torn Vietnam, and 9th-century Sweden. The immutable-past theory eliminates a number of scenario possibilities, and takes a bit of the thrill out of time travel in my own view, though I understand the reasoning behind this. And I think the D200 is really more trouble than it's worth, though it can easily be altered to the more familiar D100 rolls with a minimum of tinkering.

Still, if you prefer a lot of background info, relatively simply but realistic mechanics, and straight, "hard" sf in your time travelling, over less background, more mechanics, and a science-fantasy approach — and you don't mind researching your own scenarios — ***Time and Time Again*** is the time-travel RPG for you. If the opposite, stick with ***Timemaster.***

—William A. Barton

TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS (West End Games); $18. Designed by Eric Goldberg. 8½" x 11" 12-page rulebook, 8½" x 11" 64-page Book of Tales, 22" x 17" mounted map, 160 counters, 64 cards, six 8½" x 6" player displays, three 8½" x 11" game displays, two six-sided dice, two ziplock bags, boxed. For one to six players; playing time up to three hours. Published 1985.

In this fantasy game, each person plays an adventurer from Baghdad searching for fame and fortune. A character begins with three chosen skills (Piety, Seamanship, Wisdom, etc.) and may improve them or obtain new ones during the game. Players take turns traveling to various lands (cities, forests, seas) and meeting other beings (princesses, beggars, thieves, genies). Encounters are resolved by consulting game tables and the paragraph book. Having a specific skill can change outcomes, usually (but not always) favorably. Awards include gains or losses of Destiny Points, Story Points, skills, treasures, or wealth. An adventurer may also receive a temporary status (Insane, Blessed, Married) which limits a character's actions. The first player to fulfill his/her victory formula (any combination of 20 Destiny and Story Points, determined secretly by that player) or gain the Sultan status and return to Baghdad wins.

The components are attractive and of high quality. Rules are easily learned; the Standard rules take up less than five pages. The game has high replay value, since players have a wide range of movement and encounter options, and the Book of Tales contains over 1300 paragraphs. In the Storytelling game, each player acts out his/her encounters, while the others vote on additional awards for that character, depending on how well they feel the story is told. This may seem embarrassing at first, but can be a lot of fun when you're playing with good friends. The Adventure game adds optional rules, where characters can undertake Quests for the Sultan of Baghdad, or portray Merchants establishing trade routes between cities. These rules increase playing time, but add flavor and variety. And the Solitaire game plays very well.

Flaws are minor. The cards are made of coated paper, not cardstock, and are difficult to shuffle. Skills are not always helpful (Luck only affects encounter results occasionally). In the Standard game, a character may have only one status at a time; when a new status is obtained, the old one is discarded. This simplifies play, but odd results may develop (you might lose your Crippled status by getting Lost). The Adventure rules do allow for multiple statuses, however. And I do not understand the difference between Destiny and Story Points.

Overall, ***Tales of the Arabian Nights*** is excellent. It has something for everyone. Do not be put off by the steep price; this game is worth it.

—Wayne D. Yee

STAR FLEET BATTLES VOLUME III (Task Force Games); $19.95. Designed by Stephen Cole and others. Expansion set for ***Star Fleet Battles.*** 80-page 8½" x 11" 3-hole punched rulebook, 216 die-cut counters, 48-page 8½" x 11" booklet of Commander's SSDs. For any number of players; playing time varies. Published June 1985.

This third, culminating volume in the ***Star Fleet*** trilogy provides an incredible amount of new material, including the Interstellar Concordium (ISC), a new race; over 200 (!) new ships; and new rules

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covering docking, tactical intelligence, cargo, terrain, the Neo-Tholians, new weapons, new campaign rules, and more. Also included are 17 new scenarios portraying battles from the General war, ISC Conquest, and the Andromedan Invasion.

Volume III's strongest point is simply the amount of new material provided. Much of the material in ***Volume III*** was designed in whole or in part by players, either through playtesting, suggestions, or direct contributions. Such participation by the general public in game design is a rare thing in the gaming industry; too bad it doesn't happen more often. The new rules serve a definite purpose, especially the tactical intelligence and cargo rules. They are not overly complex or hard to understand; they're written clearly, with few typos. The designers seem to be steering for an operational level ***SFB*** system with these new rules. ***SFB*** players have wanted such a system for years. Lastly, there are no "blank pages" in this rulebook; every page is packed, but each rules section still begins on a new page.

Unfortunately, the rulebook was glued together, not stapled, so it's hard to disassemble it and put it in a binder. Due to lack of printing space, there are two rules sections out of order from the rest, and the SSDs are printed back-to-back again, requiring a copying machine before you can make full use of this product. Also, most of the new ships are simply variants of old ones; there are few innovative ships here. Finally, a few of the rules sections are merely expanded and revised versions of existing ones.

Overall, I'd say ***SFB*** fans who own the first two volumes will enjoy this one. However, people who are getting tired of the "alphabet soup" variant ships (like the KF5LRB) should look at a friend's copy before buying.

—Jeff Krogh

SUPPLEMENTS

MERCHANT PRINCE (GDW); $5.95. Designed by Marc W. Miller. Book 7 for ***Traveller***. 5½" x 8½" 48-page booklet. For referee and one or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Merchant Prince is a new ***Traveller*** rulebook devoted to merchant characters and related roleplaying activity. It does for merchants what previous volumes (such as ***Mercenary*** and ***Scouts***) did for other character classes. The book is divided into four main sections covering merchant lines, character generation, a new commerce system, and trade goods. The essay on merchant lines discusses the general nature of trading companies from the megacorporation level down to the lowly, single tramp free trader. Capsule descriptions of 37 merchant companies of various origins, both human and alien, are provided. Of more interest to most players is the section on character generation; it follows the general model of greater detail set by the previous books amplifying the character creation process. The system offered here is based largely on the "Merchant Prince" supplement published in issue #12 of the *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society*. Service terms are broken down into single years; skills and ranks attained depend on the line and department (such as deck, engineering, or sales) the character is serving in. The new trade system is something of a departure from that provided in basic ***Traveller***. Cargoes are treated more generically, being identified by the source world rather than by type, and the new pricing system relies heavily on world characteristics as well.

Merchant Prince does a good job in bringing the merchant class of characters up to the levels of those of military backgrounds. ***Traveller*** characters with merchant training can be among the best for adventures and roleplaying, and this class was somewhat slighted until these new character generation rules came out. The new trade system improves that aspect of the game in that it now addresses such concerns as the tech levels of the source and market worlds, which were ignored previously.

It is often difficult to find major fault with products in GDW's ***Traveller*** line, but sometimes one is left wanting more. In the case of ***Merchant Prince***, several possible improvements come to mind. While the capsule descriptions of various merchant lines are interesting, an essay detailing the operations of a single line (number of ships, ports called on, services offered, etc.), along the lines of the information given on Tukera Traders in ***The Traveller Adventure***, would certainly have been useful. The new trade system has its strong points, but it is more difficult to use and I miss the more specific identification of cargoes. It seems that the section of the book dealing with trade goods is an attempt to cover this last complaint, but offers no means of integrating the information into the trade system.

Despite these criticisms, ***Merchant Prince*** remains a valuable addition to the ***Traveller*** game system. If your campaign is geared toward merchant characters, this volume is worth looking at. But if you are not particularly interested in brief descriptions of the major trading companies in the GDW universe, already have the new character generation system from the special supplement to *JTAS*, and are satisfied with the current rules for interstellar trade, ***Merchant Prince*** may not be of much use to you. If you *are* interested in any of these topics, then Book 7 of ***Traveller*** is just what you're looking for.

—Tony Watson

THE FREE CITY OF KRAKOW (GDW); $6.95. Designed by William H. Keith, Jr. Module for ***Twilight: 2000***. 44-page 8½" x 11" booklet. For three or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

"To the survivors of the US 5th Division, Krakow sounded like a city out of a fairy tale . . . a castle, an evil king, even a flying carpet. Krakow seemed like an island of peace in a war-torn world. The reality was different . . ." In GDW's first adventure module for its during-the-holocaust roleplaying game, ***Twilight: 2000***, the player characters represent survivors from the introductory adventure "Escape from Kalisz" (published in the original game) who stumble upon the site of an ambushed US Special Forces Team that had been on a secret mission. Finding a mortally wounded survivor, the players learn about the mysterious Operation Reset. Fulfilling the dying soldier's last request, the players head toward Krakow with several boxes of technical blueprints and papers found at the ambush site, hoping to turn them over to representatives of the US Military Government. However, after arriving in the Polish city of Krakow, they attract the attention of the city's dictator (the mad king of the cover ad), his private army, the marauders who ambushed the original mission force, two rival US intelligence agencies, the KGB, and even Israeli Intelligence.

The unique point about this scenario is that beyond setting the initial situation described above, the referee is free to pick and choose an adventure plot appealing to the players. Many encounters and rumors are available to the characters. They are presented in a manner similar to the one GDW used for its first few ***Traveller*** adventures, i.e., a short description of a possible situation that leaves the specifics up to the referee. In fact, ***The Free City of Krakow*** is more of a description of the city than a single adventure. It describes a setting for future adventures as well. Several of the numerous NPCs described can lead the original plot off onto unrelated tangents, setting the groundwork for future adventures in the Krakow area. The surrounding areas are also well detailed, giving the players the opportunity to visit the smaller, less (sometimes more) dangerous villages and hamlets around the city. Many of the villages need the players to act as The Magnificent Seven to hold off marauding bandits.

This leads to one of the weakest points about ***Twilight: 2000***. Bandits and marauders infest the holocaust world to a large extent, leading to an Old Western style attitude to the game — leading to excessive gung-ho attitudes. Of course, this attitude will not allow characters to survive long in Krakow, which has an active paramilitary police force supported by the dictator's "flying carpet" (actually a Mi-17 helicopter armed with air-ground missiles). In fact, the rules section detailing helicopters in ***Twilight: 2000*** is very useful, something that should have been in the original game.

Overall, ***The Free City of Krakow*** is a very good module, up to the normal high GDW standards, but it will take some work from the referee to preplan the adventure (e.g., no NPC characteristics are given). If you want an excellent setting for a ***Twilight: 2000*** campaign, then pick up a copy.

—Timothy Tow

ZHODANI (Game Designers' Workshop); $7. Designed by J.A. Keith, Marc Miller, and John Harshman. Module for ***Traveller***. 49-page 8½" x 11" book. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Zhodani. A word well-known in ***Traveller***, the name of a race of humans who have warred with the Imperium, on and off, for 500 years. A race whose leaders routinely practice the mysterious art of psionics, disciplines outlawed and feared in Imperial space. ***Zhodani***, the fourth module in ***Traveller***'s alien series, parts the veil of speculation for players and referees who have been interested in this strange branch of mankind, an evolved branch where the power of the mind is commonplace. This module differs from the other three in organization, beginning with a far more detailed history than any to date. ***Zhodani*** outlines the story of the race from their beginnings as servants/pets/who knows?, owned by the powerful and quixotic Ancients, to the "present," where they are a major power. This is the society that the module portrays, a representative government and a practical utopia. Malcontents are discovered and psychologically/psionically cured of their mental problems before they cause harm. (The average Zhodani thinks very differently than the average human. This difference is the main reason for a separate module on members of humanity.) As with the other alien modules, a word generator is included. Have fun with this one; some of the consonant combinations are practically unpronounceable. After this come the character generation tables, followed by short sections on Zhodani spaceships, a refresher on psionics, and an adventure to introduce players to Zhodani society.

Zhodani is a breakthrough as great as the original alien module was. This module has rectified almost every flaw in the module format: The charts are all in the back, instead of interrupting written material; the organization of the written material has been improved; and there are 11 illustrations, three times what had been standard before. The essay on combat armor is particularly noteworthy; I wish that this information had been published before. The add-on gear and base description are universal, applying to *any* combat armor.

As much as GDW has improved with ***Zhodani***, I do wish that the format for adventures included in the modules would improve. In three of the four modules, including this one, the one adventure presented is always an epic quest, spanning great reaches of space, practically a small campaign. Unfortunately, this type of adventure is rather difficult to fit into an existing campaign, and takes up a lot of

time. I wish GDW would do adventures like the ***K'kree*** module, which featured three small adventures instead.

Still, ***Zhodani*** is a great module, the best that GDW has produced so far. I rather doubt that a lot of players will play Zhodani characters, because of the happy, well-adjusted, trusting nature of the Zhodani people (ask yourself, does that description fit any group of characters in any game you've played?), but gamemasters will love the module. A must for any continuing ***Traveller*** campaign.

—Craig Sheeley

LANDS OF MYSTERY (Hero Games); $10. By Aaron Allston; illustrated by Denis Loubet. Supplement for ***Justice Inc.*** 96-page book. For three to eight players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

This impressive supplement to Hero's ***Justice Inc.*** pulp-era RPG describes the Burroughs-Haggard "lost worlds" romance in game terms. For those who enjoy finding classic civilizations in darkest Africa or dinosaurs in a hollow Earth, former *SG* editor Aaron Allston offers an extensive treatment of this old-fashioned genre's conventions. In an amusing touch, each player is advised to assume a stereotypical character — Strong-Jawed Hero, Girl Looking For Her Father, Great White Hunter, Burly Swede, Cynical Piano Player, or one of a dozen other types — to play out his or her predetermined role in the "novel" the gamemaster creates. The Strong-Jawed Hero is expected to fall in love with the Native Princess, the Villain is expected to lose (and vanish for the "sequel"), the Absent-Minded Scientist can find a major new discovery, and so on. The exhaustive advice on world and campaign creation is followed by a typical lost world, the planet Zorandar. Characters find a mystic portal in Africa leading to a world of three suns, inhabited by native tribes, evil lizard men, and — of course! — Roman centurions. Steve Perrin provides conversions for ***Chill, Call of Cthulhu,*** and ***Daredevils.***

The style is engaging, the treatment respectful but nicely tongue-in-cheek, the artwork just superb, the data complete and appropriate, the advice sensible and valuable. The Zorandar material embodies the author's views, and is imaginative while still observing the strictures of the genre. Within its narrow purview ***Lands of Mystery*** lacks no important particular. It's gratifying to see Hero Games' graphic standards improving steadily.

This is everything you could want in a lost-world supplement . . . assuming this antiquated genre is remotely interesting to you. The monsters may vary and the number of moons might change, but the stultifying cliches of the genre remain, and ***Lands of Mystery*** enshrines them. Players are not adventurers but kabuki dancers, playing out predetermined rituals of love and good-guy heroics. By ennobling these vapid formulae, ***Lands of Mystery*** robs players of the very sense of discovery these novels tried to evoke. Also, Hero still has a few worlds to conquer in its layout and design department. For instance, character stats are shoved up against illustrations, leading to several confusing layouts. And *each* and *every* map is miskeyed to the text; numbers are missing or wrongly placed to the degree that you might as well ignore them. Time to get a better proofreading staff.

There is an undeniable (if fleeting, perhaps) charm in play-acting the roles of those adventurers in Pellucidar or Antarctica. Allston's enthusiasm for the genre is infectious. Its formulized rote-motions will almost certainly pale after a few playings, but for those who would like to try a lost-worlds campaign, ***Lands of Mystery*** is a valuable sourcebook. A strong, professional effort by all concerned.

—Allen Varney

STAR FLEET BATTLES SUPPLEMENT 2: X-SHIPS (Task Force Games); $10. Designed by Stephen V. Cole and Mike Thompson. Supplement for ***Star Fleet Battles***. 24-page rulebook, 32-page Commander's SSD book, 108 counters. For two or more players; playing time depends upon scenario. Published 1985.

SFB Supplement #2 adds X-ships to the Task Force ***SFB*** universe. "X-ship" is the term applied to the ships designed to supplement existing starships in the game. The first examples were up-rated cruisers, transformed into pocket battle-cruisers during the catastrophic General War; these are known as "First Generation" ships. The more powerful (and expensive) "Second Generation" ships were produced in response to a multilateral treaty banning large fleets; with smaller numbers of ships, individuals ships had to be faster, stronger, better. The Second Generation X-ships are that and more, with better weapons, shielding, electronics, shuttlecraft, maneuverability, etc. The rulebook explains the history and rationale of the X-ships, as well as adding more rules (yes, you heard right: *more* rules in ***SFB***) to cover the changes in the ships. Fortunately, the rulebook is organized and hole-punched for looseleaf binders, just like ***Commander's Rulebooks I*** and ***II***. The Ship System Displays shown are warships of the major powers after the fleet-banning treaty (there really aren't that many different types). First Generation SSDs are not included, although there are rules on how to make such SSDs. Finally, players will be glad to see six new scenarios in the rulebook.

Supplement #2 is welcome; after years of wrangling with premature designs of the new technology ships (based on estimates from the *Star Trek* movies), the final and definitive word is out on X-technology. No more arguments and experimental SSDs. Even things yet to come are covered: SSDs and rules pertaining to new ship types and the unknown race, the ISC, are included in this supplement. (As for the actual rules on the ISC, we'll have to wait for ***Commander's Rulebook III***.)

Unfortunately, this supplement shows too obviously that Task Force Games is trying to cash in on the hopes of ***SFB*** gamers: This supplement is hideously overpriced. Why, ***Supplement #1*** cost three dollars less, had more counters, and the SSDs were of higher quality. The SSDs in ***Supplement #2*** are horrible, generated by a dot-matrix printer of questionable quality — not up to the standard at all. This, plus the lack of SSDs for First Generation ships, illustrates declining quality.

If you play ***Star Fleet Battles***, you can live without this supplement. The galactic situation in which the Second Generation ships operate is so dull and stifling that open-warfare types won't be interested in using the new ships; Task Force has made the era preceding this time so interesting that the Second Generation ships will be neglected. Now if Task Force had included First Generation SSDs, ***Supplement #2*** might be more nearly worth the steep price tag.

—Craig Sheeley

IVINIA (Columbia Games); $20. Designed by N. Robin Crossby. Roleplaying aid; companion to ***Harn***. Two books (32 and 48 pages), 34" x 22" map. For any number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Ivinia is the second in a series of roleplaying modules depicting the continent of Lythia and the surrounding area on the world of Kethira. It is a companion to Columbia Games' first roleplaying module: ***Harn***. ***Ivinia*** details a setting patterned after Viking-era Scandinavia, in the same way that Harn is patterned after Saxon-era England. The setting described is a group of islands northeast of Harn and the northwest of the main continent of Lythia — a region settled by small clans that is just starting to develop real population centers. The inhabitants are mostly farmers who supplement their living by trade and occasional raiding. The dominant element in Ivinian society is the clan: A person's status is determined by the status of his clan, and a person without a clan is at the mercy of whomever he can sell his services to. Ivinia is a magic-weak setting, as was Harn; the emphasis is on social and political interaction, rather than monster-hunting. The components of this product live up to the high standards set by Columbia Games in their other products. The two book (*Overview* and *Index*) are well-organized and filled with illustrations and helpful maps. The map itself is as much a work of art as it is a roleplaying aid.

Ivinia's greatest strong point is its completeness. Between the *Overview* and the *Index*, the author has given you more information than you could ever use. The descriptions of settlements include which clan established each one; they allow the gamemaster to tell, at a moment's notice, to which overlord a given settlement owes allegiance. Character background generation rules allow characters to be totally integrated into the social structure of the area. Also included is information on the geology, climate, flora and fauna of the region, and material on the economics of the region which feels extremely authentic.

The weaknesses in ***Ivinia*** are few, but one stands out. The lack of magic and almost total absence of magical creatures leave the reader wondering if this is a fantasy setting or an examination of an historical region. This lack means a lot of work for the gamemaster in preparing adventure ideas and settings.

Overall, ***Ivinia*** is an excellent product, and I recommend it to anyone who uses ***Harn*** or is looking for a fantasy setting with a definite Norse flavor. The high price is a drawback, and I would not recommend it to those who are only looking for source material for their campaigns.

—David Noel

THE DUEL (The Avalon Hill Game Company); $12. Designed by Future Pastimes (Peter Olotka, Bill Eberle, and Jack Kittredge). Supplement for ***Dune***. One sheet of rules, six Main Character Leader Discs, a Duelling Arena Playing Board, 25 Duelling Cards, six Block Tokens, and five extra Treachery Cards. Published 1984.

Released simultaneously with the other ***Dune*** supplement, ***Spice Harvest, The Duel*** provides optional rules for duels between character groups by Kanly challenge, and Wars of Assassins. Each group also receives a 10 strength Leader which can be used as a regular leader; but if the Leader is killed in a duel or through assassination, that player is out of the game. Duelling is played out on a concentric circular board, with Duelling Cards allowing you to attack left or right, in or out, place blocks, remove blocks, counterattack, or flee the Arena. Extra Poison Weapon, Poison Defense, and Worthless cards are provided, as well as a "Cone of Silence" and a "Residual Poison" card.

The Duel rules allow the players to duel each other with relatively simple rules that still provide some strategic elements, as well as conveying the elegant duelling style of the Dune books and movie.

Despite the simple rules, any particular duel seems to go on awfully long, or perhaps it is that most players have more to gain by challenging others to duel, so that (in a six-player game) there are usually six rounds of duelling per turn. Blocking really doesn't seem to help a great deal, and how it operates (blocking off certain areas of the Arena Board) doesn't make much sense. And finally, the original concept of Leader Strength reflected not only combat ability, but guile, cunning, and assassination ability. But since Leader Strengths determine how much damage you do to your oppo-

nent in a duel, now the Baron Harkonnen, with a strength of 10, can outduel Stilgar with a strength of 7! Or Edric of the Guild can outduel any sister of the Bene Gesserit!

In all, ***The Duel*** makes an interesting supplement to the original ***Dune*** rules, but overuse of the challenge rules just bogs down the game. A couple of alterations would make for a more balanced addition to the basic ***Dune*** game. For instance, change the challenge limitations from one per player to one per *alliance*; or change the rules for loss of a Leader from that player going out of the game to, perhaps, his losing all of his spice, his highest strength non-10 Leader, and no charity for two turns.

—Steve Crow

SPICE HARVEST (The Avalon Hill Game Company); $10. Designed by Future Pastimes (Peter Olotka, Bill Eberle, and Jack Kittredge). Supplement for ***Dune***. One sheet of rules, six Planet Cards, 10 Yes/No Cards, 30 Share Cards, 36 Access/Stronghold Cards, 14 Harvest Cards, and five extra Treachery Cards. Published 1984.

Released simultaneously with the other ***Dune*** supplement, ***The Duel, Spice Harvest*** provides optional setup rules for the different characters in ***Dune***. Characters bid to become Manager of Arrakis, then the Manager determines the spice harvest for each of five years. The Manager allocates shares, possibly cheating in his favor, and the other players vote to see if they will accept their shares or catch the Manager cheating. After share allocation is completed, the players can bid on Access cards, which either provide access to Strongholds or troop strengths to occupy them with. To add to the intrigue, each of the six different characters has a new power which allows him or her to perform a special function during the pre-setup round.

Overall, ***Spice Harvest*** is mostly for those who have grown tired of the predetermined setup rules provided in the basic game. This option allows for widely different setups, such as the Fremen starting with Carthag in their possession, or the Sisterhood with Arrakeen. The extra Treachery cards provide new Projectile Weapon, Shield, and Worthless cards, as well as a Harvester card that doubles a spice blow and a Thumper card that summons a worm.

While there are no real flaws with these additional rules, there are some gaps in what is covered. The Manager can purchase a second card from the Guild, but can the Guild buy a second card (paying the spice to the bank) from itself? If a Worm card comes up during harvest determination, the Fremen player automatically becomes Manager, but it is never explained what happens if someone purchases a second Harvest card from the Guild and that card is a Worm card. Do the Fremen get the first card that the original Manager had, or do they draw a new one?

The game's owner will have to determine what to do in some of the above situations. But other than that, this supplement is a definite must for those who have grown tired up the old setup rules for ***Dune***.

—Steve Crow

ILLUMINATI EXPANSION SET 3 (Steve Jackson Games); $4.95. Designed by Steve Jackson and Allen Varney. Supplement to ***Illuminati***. 14" x 16" gameboard, 108 cardboard counters, 8" x 14" rules sheet, errata slip, all in 4" x 7" ziplock bag. For two to six players; playing time two to five hours. Published 1985.

Hard-core fans of the game might be wary of the fact that there is now a gameboard for ***Illuminati***. Not to worry, the board merely serves to keep track of world opinion with respect to the alignments in the game. This is necessary because through the use of the new Propaganda rules you can promote the alignment of your choice, giving all groups with that alignment more Power and Income, and eventually weakening the opposite alignment in these respects. These effects are, of course, subject to the tampering of the players. Brainwashing is also introduced, allowing players to permanently alter alignments. Rules for permanently increasing Power, Resistance, and Income, and a trio of new Illuminati groups, round out the set. There are no cards or "extras" such as the Illuminati membership cards or buttons found in previous expansions.

The most interesting portion of the new set is, of course, the Propaganda track (i.e., the gameboard). It is very colorful, and contains such pertinent information as the new turn sequence (which allows "free" attempts at Propaganda and Brainwashing attacks) and a listing of Media groups (which, realistically, affect Propaganda attempts). With Power and Income increasing inconspicuously through Propaganda, groups such as the Bavarians and the Gnomes have to be monitored even more closely. Paranoia is further increased through the ability to change alignments, so you also have to watch the Assassins, Bermudans, and Discordians closely. Small-fry groups can be beefed up with these rules, almost to the point of absurdity: Imagine the Goldfish Fanciers with a 5 or 6 Power and an equal Income. Even the new Illuminati groups are fairly clever. And once again the cover is gorgeous.

But sinister forces have attempted to mar the quality of this product. The gameboard switches the locations of the Weird and Criminal alignments, and this is likely to cause some confusion during play. The new rules definitely complicate and prolong the game, but they are all optional (you're missing out if you ignore any of them, though). There are only a few counters for each alignment, so you might have to make up more to keep up with all the deranged Brainwashing going on. Another sheet of counters would have made up for this.

If you want some great new wrinkles for your ***Illuminati*** game, you definitely need this supplement. The rules make for a longer but much more enjoyable game. And don't let the lack of a Pocket Box or the thinness of the package fool you. There's a lot here for five (Mega)bucks.

—Kevin Ross

TOON STRIKES AGAIN (Steve Jackson Games); $4.95. Written by Warren Spector. Supplement for ***TOON*** (of course!). 40-page 8½" x 11" booklet. For Animator and two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Don't touch that dial! Watch for these exciting adventures coming to a game store near you: a fierce commercial war between noodle vendors, a search for buried treasure while shipwrecked on a desert island, a visit to Transylvania in search of a vampire with a good profile, and the crowning of the winner of the First Annual Kruller King Cake-Off and Calorie Count. All this and more in:

(I don't think we should say yet. It'll build excitement).

Those people who went and brought you ***TOON*** can't leave well enough alone, so now ***TOON Strikes A —***

(Not yet!)

When?

(Later. First the good parts —)

Okay. Besides the previously alluded-to adventures, this supplement has advice for the ***TOON*** Animator (he needs it) and an assortment of Cartoon Standard items and practices fiendishly withheld from the original game in order to have something for this sequel, entitled ***TOON Str —***

(What about the sample characters?)

I was getting to that. There are also two pages of

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sample characters in the back of *TOO* —

(Yeah, including the rest of Mack the Mouse accidentally left out of *TOON*.)

Hey! Who's writing this review anyway?

(Go ahead. Tell about all the problems with this module.)

Well . . .

(Go on.)

Do you have any ideas?

(I'm not the one writing this review.)

Well, it's only 40 pages. And they left out my favorite cartoony thing: the Incredibly Busy Empty Street. You know — the empty street that's immediately swarming with traffic as soon as the character steps into it, knocking him flat or causing him to scurry back to the curb, only to face an empty street again.

(That's it?)

Well, what can you say about something like *TOON Str* —

[EDITOR'S NOTE: YOU'D BETTER SAY SOMETHING BAD ABOUT IT! WE KEEP GETTING COMPLAINTS THAT OUR MAGAZINE NEVER RUNS CRITICISM OF OUR OWN PRODUCTS.]

Really?

[EDITOR'S NOTE: YES. IT'S A SHAME ALL OF OUR PRODUCTS ARE PERFECT.]

Well, these adventures are full of events that should follow one after another as the characters move sequentially through them, but that hardly ever happens in *TOON* adventures. Far better if they had simply set up a situation and let the characters run loose in it, because that's what they're going to do anyway. The advice for the Animator covers this problem, but it strikes me again that there should be a better way.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: IS THAT IT?]

Yes.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'LL HAVE TO DO. MAYBE I COULD CONVINCE STEVE TO DESIGN A FLOP FOR ONCE, JUST FOR THE NOVELTY (NOT TO MENTION THE BOOST IT WOULD GIVE THIS MAGAZINE'S INTEGRITY).]

Good luck! Now, back to the review of *TOON Strikes Ag* —

(Wait! Summary first, title after.)

That's backwards.

(Appropriate.)

Okay. Buy this if you can afford to buy anything. We reviewers can't. They lock us up in small cubicles with only a small typewriter as a friend. They feed us only scraps the dogs have refused —

(That's enough of that!)

Sorry. Buy it if you liked *TOON*. The name is: *TOON Stri* —

(Oops! Out of space. This wouldn't have happened if they'd called it *TOON II*.)

—Russell Grant Collins

CLOCKWORK MAGE (Mayfair); $6. Designed by Susan Stone and M.E. Allen. Adventure module for ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*** or similar fantasy roleplaying system. 8½" x 11" 32-page book, 17" x 11" cardstock map. Playing time and number of players indefinite. Published 1985.

For some time now the major bookstore chains have been carrying a healthy supply of roleplaying material, with most of it bearing the logo of big-timer TSR. But over the past year, I've noticed more and more ***RoleAids*** modules popping up; the last time I looked, nearly half of the roleplaying products at the local B. Dalton's were from Mayfair (along with a whole bunch of reduced-price remainders from TSR. Hmmm . . .).

That's not surprising, seeing how the ***RoleAids*** series has been gradually improving — to the point where these modules from the "other company" are as good or better than the "official" ones from TSR. ***Clockwork Mage*** is another terrific effort, one that'll give a lift to all but the most jaded ***AD&D***ers. The adventurers are plopped in the middle of a long-standing battle between two aging wizards who annoy each other not with armies or monsters, but with elaborate practical jokes. And if that's not enough to hook you, wait'll you meet the Sims, a new class of creature that's sort of a cross between a robot and Pinocchio. I won't give any more away, but will add that it's unlikely your group has ever played an adventure quite like this.

The practical joke aspect of ***Clockwork Mage*** is so much fun, I wish the designers had done more with it. You'll find yourself wanting more jokes and "unconventional" obstacles. (As GM, I remedied this by throwing them in wherever I could, and making up my own when I'd gone through all the ones provided.) The style of the adventure begs for a grand, solid twist at the end; where's the slam-bang battle with an army of Sims or the final joke-to-end-all-jokes? The reward at the end is unbelievably skimpy, but you'll see an easy — and obvious — solution to that problem when you read the module.

It's not often you run across a module with a sense of humor. It's rarer still to find a module for ***AD&D*** that, after all these years, can still make a claim to originality. ***Clockwork Mage*** can claim both. Add great graphics, a clear presentation, and a striking cover, and you've got one of the best fantasy supplements of the year.

—Rick Swan

FINAL CHALLENGE (Mayfair); $6. Designed by Matthew Costello. Solitaire ***RoleAids*** adventure for ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons***. 8½" x 11" 32-page book. For one player; playing time up to three to four hours. Published 1984.

Any solitaire module without a magic ink pen or a cellophane mystery viewer is already a step ahead in my book. Don't get me wrong — I like a good gimmick as much as the next guy, but a strong story is worth a hundred magic pens. This is no news to Matt Costello, who's put together a clever plot, a colorful cast of characters, and an engagingly tricky puzzle to come up with one of the best solitaire modules in a long time.

Final Challenge casts the player as Tel El'Ryn, a better-than-average fighter on the trail of the mysterious Guidion and his Tower of Madness. The character statistics are pre-generated, but the player is allowed to select four magic items that he thinks will help him the most (good luck). From there, the game uses the familiar numbered paragraph system to direct the player from event to event based on his decisions at various encounters. Even without a referee, the design of ***Final Challenge*** is remarkably rich, complete with a simple but effective combat system and a hex-grid wilderness map that randomly generates its own encounters. In fact, ***Final Challenge*** has more in common with the old ***Barbarian Prince*** boardgame than it does with most solitaire modules (and that's a compliment, because ***Barbarian Prince*** was one terrific game).

The most frequent problem with solitaire modules is their limited play value, and it's a problem shared by ***Final Challenge***. I got through the whole thing in about an hour and a half, although I admit that I stumbled into the key hexes by sheer dumb luck. Replay value is non-existent — when the mystery is solved, that's it. A system of alternate plots would be nice, but that'll give something for Mr. Costello to work on next time.

Kids who gobble up those "endless adventure" interactive paperbacks ought to shake an extra couple of dollars from their piggy banks and try a copy of ***Final Challenge***. Solitaire fans could easily get spoiled by modules as good as this. Check it out.

—Rick Swan

CREATURES AND TREASURES (Iron Crown Enterprises); $10. Designed by S. Coleman Charlton and Leo O. Short. Roleplaying supplement for ***Rolemaster*** and other fantasy roleplaying systems. 8½" x 11" 96-page book. Published 1985.

I think there must be a federal law of some kind that requires game companies to publish their own fantasy roleplaying encyclopedias — how else do you explain the endless stream of this stuff? Iron Crown has finally complied with the publication of ***Creatures and Treasures***, and it's certainly one of the most ambitious. Within its pages are literally hundreds of descriptions and statistics for virtually every creature that's ever crawled across the pages of your favorite roleplaying game. There are also sections for generating treasures and magic items, encounter charts keyed to location, creature power, specific situations, and even tips for creating your own monsters. A very impressive package indeed.

Although the text is understandably slanted toward ICE's own ***Rolemaster*** series, the statistics are easily adaptable to any system. (For slow learners, there are step-by-step conversion notes for ***AD&D*** and ***RuneQuest***.) The detail is remarkable. In addition to a paragraph or two of text description, a typical entry includes up to 20 statistics for movement, combat, and assorted odds and ends. If there are any "Murphys," they're well-hidden; a random examination of a couple of dozen entries didn't turn up a single number or interpretation that seemed out of place. Top-notch production values and graphics make this one of the best-looking books of its kind.

Of course, no directory of fantasy creatures can ever be truly "complete," and you may be disappointed to discover that your favorite fire-breathing water buffalo isn't listed. More objectionable is the lack of illustrations. Ideally, there should be a picture for every entry, but ***C and T*** doesn't even come close. The text also tends to drift off into the stratosphere a little too often, as in this excerpt from the Unicorn entry: "The unicorn stoops to bloody its horn with fierce violence should less innocent figures attempt to curtail its freedom." Do the ICE-men have something against plain English?

Finally, before you buy this or any other play aid book, ask yourself if it's something you can really *use*. These books are great for designers, tinkerers, and browsers, but they can be expensive dust-collectors for the average player. If you're really in the market, ***Creatures and Treasures*** is as good as they come.

—Rick Swan

THE YETI SANCTION (The Avalon Hill Game Company); $8. Written by Kain Guistino and Tom Moldvay. Adventure for ***Lords of Creation***. 31-page game book, five pages of rules on automobile chases, cardboard gamemasters screen, boxed. For four to eight players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

The Yeti Sanction is Avalon Hill's second "official" adventure for its ***Lords of Creation*** game. It is designed to be played as part of a series of adventures but can be played by itself. It is also designed to introduce a system for automobile chases and provides a list of special equipment for modern intelligence agents.

(SPOILER WARNING: The following comments reveal much of the plot of the adventure. If you plan to play ***The Yeti Sanction*** *yourself, read no further. — The Editors.)*

The adventure begins with the recruitment of an unofficial espionage unit to rescue a number of kidnapped government officials from a mysterious terrorist organization called YETI. This leads to a straight mystery in Washington, a dangerous hijacking over the Atlantic, and a comic-book-style assault on a mad scientist's headquarters in the Himalayas. Here the players are trapped in a runaway spacecraft and stranded on an asteroid inhabited by a wide variety of unexplained but seemingly mystical creatures.

This module, like its parent game, tries to be too many things at once. The initial goings-on in Washington are well done and include an interesting mystery. But the introduction of an ancient mystic who gives advice in dreams smacks of desperation on the part of the author. The revelation of a race of aliens called the Yuga as the force behnd YETI is not well handled, and their motives are not properly explained. Arranging for the players to be trapped on the Yuga's escaping spaceship is simply an attempt to draw out the story. No amount of suspension of belief can account for the players' arrival on a lost asteroid dominated by undefined creatures called Archon.

The new systems given here for auto chases and crossing the dangerous mountain terrain are fairly simple and work well as part of the larger game. However, after the first test run, I have decided to play this module only through the battle at YETI headquarters and arrange a separate adventure to send my players through the magical environment of the lost asteroid.

—William Wilson Goodson, Jr.

TO TACKLE THE T.O.T.E.M. (FGU); $5. Designed by Jeff O'Hare; art by Don Heck and Jeff Dee. 24-page 8½" x 11" book with 11" x 17" cardstock counter insert. For GM and several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

The latest in FGU's series of adventures for ***Villains & Vigilantes*** is ***To Tackle the T.O.T.E.M.***, a superpowered roleplaying clash between valiant heroes and genetically-altered supervillains under the control of the international conspiracy known as TOTEM, run by the mysterious Purple Mask. The scenario has two major sections: The first pits heroes against a TOTEM attack on the Cogan Museum in Tucson, AZ, to steal a dimensional transporter (the description of which sounds vaguely like a TARDIS). In the second section, the heroes must launch their own attack on TOTEM headquarters to thwart the villains' plans for world domination via the use of missiles loaded with a mutation-spawning virus. There are even brief guidelines for the GM in case the heroes are defeated by TOTEM. The package includes detailed maps and plans of the museum and TOTEM's base, with written descriptions of each; ***V&V*** stats on the supervillains and Brown Shirt stock troops of TOTEM; full-color counters of all the game participants, vehicles, and random items of equipment; and a two-page guide to converting ***V&V*** to Chaosium's ***Superworld***, reprinted from the ***Superworld Companion***.

T.O.T.E.M.'s best features are its individual parts rather than the adventure as a whole: stats for rocket belts, a VTOL, and a medium helicopter, with counters for the latter two; the maps of the museum and the TOTEM base, either of which could be used independently of this adventure; and the new villains presented, any of whom could also be used separately. The ***Superworld*** conversions are handy for ***SW*** GMs wishing to convert the characters of this scenario to that game, though most will probably already have the ***SW Companion*** (which is necessary for complete conversions anyway).

Overall, however, ***T.O.T.E.M.*** is at best an average ***V&V*** adventure compared to other recent releases. Its two parts don't connect very well and are totally dependent on a single NPC getting from part 1 to part 2 — an NPC who could very easily be killed by overzealous heroes. Furthermore, a lot of detailed info usually present in ***V&V*** adventures is missing here: structural ratings for doors, walls, and equipment; armor ratings on the Brown Shirts' Heavy Battle Armor — data the GM will have to make up on his own. And the maps and descriptions don't always tally, which could cause problems.

While ***To Tackle the T.O.T.E.M.*** probably has enough good material in it to make it worthwhile to the dedicated ***V&V*** GM, as a whole it is lacking. I recommend it only to those who don't mind filling in the missing data or who collect all ***V&V*** scenarios released.

—William A. Barton

CONVOY (Steve Jackson Games); $4.95. Designed by Steve Jackson and David Ladyman. Programmed adventure for ***Car Wars***. 64-page 8½"x 5½" booklet. For one to six players; playing time three to five hours. Published 1984.

Convoy is the first ***Car Wars*** module for solo or refereed play. With a system that allows one person to play six, six people to play one apiece, or any mix in between, the module accommodates up to six players. Why multiple characters, though? Because without six characters, you're not likely to survive the adventure! The adventure's premise has the six characters, professional duellists, escorting a vital 22-wheeler with a load of algae from Lexington, Kentucky to Memphis, Tennessee. Starting shortly after dusk, the convoy must go 400 miles on one of the nastiest stretches of highway in the land, noted for its poor surface, cycle gangs, "toll stops," and highway robbers. Of course, the well-informed ***Car Wars*** player will recognize this scenario as the one from the first issue of *Autoduel Quarterly*, and it's basically the same scenario. There are changes, though: The road-wear rules have been cleaned up considerably, although they are no longer universal; some of the encounters are different, and there are enough new encounters that a player who enters this adventure thinking it's going to be a carbon-copy of the original is going to crash and burn. (Remember, you *must* have ***Car Wars*** to play this module. It doesn't come with the counters, maps, or rules needed to play the game.)

Convoy is an excellent concept, one which hasn't been seen since the old Metagaming ***Death Test*** line: a playable solo adventure that is so arranged as to be refereed with ease. And not only is the adventure manageable, the physical space needed is very reasonable; a card-table will do. This is a pleasant departure from the monster maps usually found in ***Car Wars*** material, such as ***Crash City*** and the ***Armadillo Autoduel Arena***. For me, though, the best part about ***Convoy*** is the solo feature. Finally, ***Car Wars*** fans who don't regularly find opportunity for refereed play have an adventure that doesn't need a referee and many people.

Convoy has its faults: Editorial errors in a programmed adventure are a catastrophe, and there's one in this! The number 326 has been omitted from entry 313, preventing the use of the Bluegrass Parkway south of Elizabethtown; fortunately, the referee's map has the numbers to get you back on track. And what happened to the darkness combat modifiers, introduced in the original scenario? However, these are minor problems compared to the major drawback of any programmed adventure: After you play it a few times, it pales. When you know what the encounters that lie ahead are, it becomes much less of a challenge; this is too bad, because the encounters *make* this adventure.

Still, ***Convoy*** is an admirable product, fully up to SJ Games' standards (I found it to be extremely long for the price). The adventure promises not only hours of good play, but more programmed adventures in the future: ***Convoy*** is presented as an example for the design of future adventures by SJ Games.

—Craig Sheeley

DEVIL'S DOMAIN (FGU); $5. Designed by Troy Christiensen; art by Dave Gifford and Jeff Dee. One 8½" x 11" 24-page book with 11"·x 17" cardstock counter insert. For GM and several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Villains & Vigilantes GMs will have a hellishly good time pitting their players against the denizens of ***Devil's Domain***, the newest ***V&V*** adventure

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from FGU. And the superpowered player-characters will find themselves up against a devilish challenge this time around — zombies, horrible mutants, spirits, ghouls, demons, and even the Devil himself! This high-level scenario for ***V&V*** (the first by designer Troy Christiensen — and, one hopes, not the last) is simply a lot of fun. Superheroes find themselves up against interdimensional superscience tainted with just enough fire and brimstone to keep them on their toes. The action starts when a strange power vortex appears near the Bermuda Triangle, sucking the surroundings into its maw and claiming three American and one Soviet hero before it's destroyed. But another one appears soon afterward over Stonehenge, and the player-heroes must stop this one. To do so, they must face zombies and what are apparently demons from hell itself. If successful in halting this initial interdimensional beachhead, the heroes will next travel to Easter Island to find a way to counterattack against the Devil's Domain itself — or see the Earth subjugated by its hellspawn.

Devil's Domain presents a refreshing change from the normal ***V&V*** adventure (as good as those usually are) and a lot of nasty surprises for the player-characters. While there is plenty of opportunity for heroes to do a great deal of demon-busting, there are also lots of places where they'll have to use their wits and good sense — or wind up as demon fodder. The demon hordes are especially well thought out and are just the sort of grisly-looking beasties that could either be supernatural demon-spawn or creatures from a dimension in which our own natural laws don't apply (the latter, of course, being the case). I like the illos and counter depictions of these, especially.

The only problem I found in ***Domain*** is an appalling lack of proofreading — this book has more typos than I've noticed in an FGU product since the first edition of ***Space Opera***. Most aren't serious, though in at least one place a crucial line has been left out (telling how an NPC ghost can help player-characters if they're getting beaten in the final, climactic, win-or-lose-it-all battle). Bad move. And it makes me wonder how well I can trust some of the figures in the character stats and elsewhere, too.

Other than such errors — and the fact that beginning characters, unless there are a *lot* of them, have little chance of survival — ***Devil's Domain*** is an excellent adventure for ***V&V*** superhero action. With the proper conversions, it'd serve admirably as a scenario for ***Champions, Superworld,*** or any other superhero RPG as well.

—William A. Barton

THE ROAD (Task Force Games); $7.95. Designed by Aaron Allston. An auto-combat play aid. 8½" x 11½" book made of durable cardboard to be cut into various sizes of road sections — 14 8" square, 12 2" x 8", many others of varying sizes. Published 1985.

In the wake of rumors that the AutoVentures line had folded comes ***The Road***, a package of sturdy road sections for games such as ***Car Wars, Battlecars,*** and ***Highway 2000***. This is the first AutoVentures product to be released by its new parent, Task Force Games. The road sections in this set range from thin one-lane strips containing diagonal parking spaces to two-lane strips with turning lanes to straight and curved four-lane sections. Also included are a number of counters depicting various road signs, traffic lights, and autos. A one-page rulesheet is also included, giving the effects (for each game) of some of the terrain types encountered on these sections.

The best thing about these sections is their durability. The paper road sections used in ***Car Wars*** often tear when taped together, but unless you're playing with devolved opponents, that shouldn't happen with these. There are some fine areas for duelling here too. Check out the two-lane bridge on the cover of the book. Anybody for an unexpected swim? (This section cries out for a good battle.) There are also separate counters for trees, thin strips to be used for alleys, an elevated pedestrian walkway, another two-lane bridge, and a really deadly crater that spans both lanes of the road! Some of these pieces have color features such as trees, grass, and water. The use of sections of varying widths is also a pleasant departure from the ***Car Wars*** norm.

The price, however, might be prohibitive for some. Eight dollars does seem like a lot, especially when these sections are single-sided. They would have been much nicer had they been printed on both sides. ***Car Wars*** players will have a rude awakening when they find that the majority of ***The Road***'s sections are two-lane as opposed to that game's three; just makes for shorter and dirtier fights, that's all. Most of the counters are useless (I know if I had a vehicular weapon I would leave very few traffic lights and signs intact, and there are a lot of them here) and there are a total of four car counters, all ***Car Wars*** sized. That all the larger sections have buildings along their borders I also found a little annoying.

Although there is somewhat less material here than, say, in ***Car Wars*** Expansion Set 1, the components are of such high quality that the costs are quite comparable. If you use road sections often, this product will prove to be a welcome improvement over its paper counterparts. If you're an arena fan or only a part-time dueller the expense might be a little too high for your tastes.

—Kevin Ross

UNCLE ALBERT'S AUTO STOP & GUNNERY SHOP 2035 CATALOG (Steve Jackson Games); $3.95. Written by Steve Jackson, Scott Haring, Martha Ladyman, Jim Gould, and numerous designers; illustrated by Kyle Miller and others. Supplement for ***Car Wars***. 5½" x 8½" 40-page booklet. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Ever since the first issue of *Autoduel Quarterly*, new items for car and driver have appeared in advertisements from Uncle Albert's Auto Stop & Gunnery Shop, adding such items as laser-reflective armor, ejection seats, ram plates, roll cages, and much more to the list of options in ***Car Wars***. However, the only way to find these items was to have the issue of *ADQ* in which they appeared. No longer! Now, Uncle Albert has published his own catalog, including nearly every item featured in past issues of *ADQ*, complete with prices, sizes, descriptions, and everything else you need to install these goodies in your deathmobile. Over 120 items are listed, arranged in four sections for convenience: armaments, displaying every weapon in the game except for the aircraft bomb racks; defenses; accessories, with everything from computers to sun roofs; and personal gear for the discriminating pedestrian. Most entries are straight from *ADQ*, although the rules for the grenade launcher and the external weapon pod have been revised. But there are many new entries hidden among the old: rocket magazines, napalm mines, the fiendish ice dropper, the sun roof, the roof-top cargo carrier, corner-mounted weapons, a portable laser rifle, and more. All of this new equipment, complete with game data and descriptions, plus the old standbys, are yours in ***Uncle Albert's Auto Stop & Gunnery Shop Catalog***!

This supplement is excellent, equal to the ***AADA Vehicle Guide*** in utility. The organization is simple and easy to use, the entries are clear and concise, and the catalog is illustrated by a squad of artists. There is even a history of Uncle Albert's at the end of the catalog.

I wish that the catalog had listed all of the options that appeared in *ADQ*. Unfortunately, we'll still have to dig out the back issues for PR radials, the Thundercat Power Plant, and the Dump Trailer. These are not included in the catalog; we are told that we'll have to buy ***Deluxe Car Wars*** to find out about them. I found a typo copied straight from ***Autoduel Champions*** regarding the IR sighting system: It still says that it takes up one space and no spaces in the description. Finally, the vast amount of material in this catalog illustrates the fact that ***Car Wars*** has evolved into a maxi-game, complete with seven expansions (and more on the way), five supplements, its own magazine, etc. Like ***Star Fleet Battles*** and ***Squad Leader, Car Wars*** has mutated beyond its simple beginnings and become a monster of gamer-frightening complexity.

Some of us like complexity. Some of us like to build our own vehicles, and outfit them with dozens of options. Some of us like the monster that ***Car Wars*** has become (some of us helped it to grow). If you are one of these ***Car Wars*** players, this supplement will prove to be invaluable, as it is an almost complete listing of the options in ***Car Wars***.

—Craig Sheeley

THUNDER OVER JOTUNHEIM (TSR, Inc.); $6. Written by Bruce Nesmith. Solo adventure for ***Marvel Super Heroes***. 16-page booklet, fold-out cover, 33" x 21¼" map of Asgard, 2½" x 1" "Magic Viewer." For one player; playing time one hour. Published 1985.

The player takes on the role of the Mighty Thor as the hero's evil half-brother, Loki, plots with the storm giants to bring about Asgard's downfall. To this end, he has stolen the sword of Frey, a weapon of mighty power that could easily mean the difference between victory and defeat for the Asgardians. Armed with his mighty hammer Mjolnir and a gift from the sorceress Karnilla, Queen of the Norns, Thor wanders the landscape from the Domain of the Rock Trolls to the Flaming Chasm to the Forest of Nightmare Plants, searching for the sword and Loki.

Thunder Over Jotunheim, the first solo module for ***Marvel Super Heroes***, provides a convenient way for a player to use some of the non-group heroes such as Thor (and in later modules, one hopes, Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, Iron Man, etc.) — heroes that are popular at Marvel but otherwise wouldn't get much module coverage. The module uses the various "gifts of Karnilla" to generate a different location and differing clues for the sword of Frey each time. With the relatively simple combat rules of ***Marvel Super Heroes***, the simple guidelines for combat with no supervising gamemaster works quite well. The random chart for different magical spells used by spellcasters could be used in other ***MSH*** modules to a similar purpose (The Enchantress in ***Marvel Secret Wars*** comes immediately to mind).

On the other hand, most of the encounters seem a little powerful for Thor to handle, due to his relatively low body armor. Upon leaving Asgard from one of two paths, Thor ends up in a battle where he is either almost certainly defeated, or leaves and forfeits all of his Karma. Several other battles are in a similar vein: no rules for fleeing a combat are provided, so the assumption is that once Thor is in a fight, he's in it to the finish. And finally, the map, which has paths going from one locale to the next, the distance between locales taking exactly one day to traverse, is really useless as an actual map. So if you intend to use this module as the beginning of the further adventures of Thor, the map is practically useless for that purpose.

Overall, ***Thunder Over Jotunheim*** is an adequate one-shot solitaire adventure, but its usefulness for a continuing campaign is almost nil. An interesting tidbit for avid ***Marvel Super Heroes*** players, of little or no use to players of other superhero RPGs.

—Steve Crow

HILLMEN OF THE TROLLSHAWS (Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.); $6. Designed by Jeff McKeage. Module for ***Middle-earth Role Playing*** system. 36-page 8½" x 11" book with maps inside cover. For three or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Hillmen is one of four Middle-earth "adventure" modules, distinguishable from ICE's Middle-earth "campaign" modules because they are smaller in size and scope. The activity and adventures in ***Hillmen*** take place in Rhudaur, once a powerful Dunedain kingdom, now a foreboding land totally under the influence of the Witch-king of Angmar. The maps and description focus primarily on the wooded and hilly Trollshaws region of Rhudaur. The material is presented in the same manner as all Middle-earth modules: a broad history of the area, highlighting the land, climate, ecology, and inhabitants, followed by a more detailed focus on specific "places of interest." The module covers the Hillmen tribes of Rhudaur (sundered descendants of the Dunlendings), the Petty-Dwarves (mentioned briefly in *The Silmarillion*), and the few remaining Dunedain, and also features adventures involving Troll-lairs and a Petty-Dwarf hold. The obligatory herb chart and price table are also included.

The central and most outstanding feature of ***Hillmen*** is the layouts and descriptions of Cameth Brin, a huge fortress complex built into a twisty, misshapen hill. With a barracks village beneath its unscalable cliff-face, Cameth Brin provides one of the most unusual adventuring environments I've ever encountered. The fortress, accessible by numerous secret passageways and guarded by a classic Tolkien beastie (I won't spoil the surprise), provides a plethora of adventure possibilities. A terrific rescue-the-princess mission is provided and leaves ample room for springboarding by the creative GM.

Although the rest of the module is well-conceived and well-written, it seems to exist mainly as "trim" on the Cameth Brin material, and little of it is very useful on its own. Plenty of nasty beasts are provided, but no encounter chart is supplied to make cross-country dangers resolvable. The adventures are geared primarily to high-level adventurers, and the GM will have to exercise caution using the module with inexperienced characters. Most annoying of all, the regional map does not extend far enough east (into the Misty Mountains) to accommodate some of the background material in the text.

Despite these misgivings, I found ***Hillmen of the Trollshaws*** to be a good value for six dollars. If you use the "Trollshaws" adventure in the original ***MERP*** rules as a jumping-off point, you'll find this module useful for continuing the campaign in the same area. Cameth Brin is a worthy enough conception to be used in any fantasy campaign, ***MERP*** or otherwise. To ICE I say: Continue the smaller "adventure" modules. They are far more useful and priceworthy than the large-scale campaign overviews.

—J. Michael Caparula

LIVE AND LET DIE (Victory Games, Inc.); $10. Designed by Gerard Christopher Klug, illustrated by James Talbot. Adventure for ***James Bond 007***. 64-page Gamemaster Guide, 8-page map booklet, eight mission sheets, stand-up screen. For one to three players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Released simultaneously with ***You Only Live Twice*** as Victory Game's fourth and fifth "movie-adapted" James Bond adventures, ***Live and Let Die*** is billed as a "tournament level" module. As in the movie, the plot involves the investigation of three murdered M.I.6 agents, two of whom were on the trail of drug smugglers. Compounding the investigating agents' problems is their unseen opponents' unfailing ability to locate them, and a series of mysterious Tarot cards.

Live and Let Die is easily Victory's best ***James Bond 007*** module. The plot is intricate without being too complicated to solve; it has an interesting set of bad guys (ranging from "Big Silver" to Dr. Emman Kananga to Baron Samedi himself); and it features the first non-"realistic" game mechanics (magic) in a ***James Bond 007*** module. The magical elements can easily be removed and/or adapted for those who don't prefer that kind of thing in their secret agent games. The quality of the player-handout mission sheets is the best I've seen in any module or game *anywhere*: The two photo handouts look like actual photographs, the Tarot card handouts are well done, and the "Fillet of Soul Restaurant" advertisement (with a picture of a beaming T.H. Johnson, owner and cook, telling about how he uses his mechanical arm to ". . . cut up fried chicken for the folks!") indicates that somebody at Victory has a sense of humor.

My *only* complaint with ***Live and Let Die*** is the added price you have to pay to get a "tournament level" (i.e., more difficult and lethal than usual) adventure. It seems unfair to have to pay an extra $2 for something which is harder for your players to complete (plus, to be fair, a separate map booklet).

Overall, though, the extra $2 is more than worth it to get this module. Its plot, which deals with drug smuggling as opposed to the usual James-Bond-ish world-shattering brink-of-destruction events, makes it more suitable for adaptation to other secret agent roleplaying games than Victory's other modules.

—Steve Crow

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN (Victory Games, Inc.); $8. Designed and developed by Brian Peterson and Robert Kern. Supplement to ***James Bond 007***. 48-page scenario booklet, eight mission sheets, gamemaster screen. For one to four

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The characters' assignment to maintain surveillance on a suspect selling classified plans leads to much more, as they receive new orders to prevent the designer of the Solex Agitator, Prof. Gibson, from defecting to the Soviet Union. From there they have to track down the famous $1,000,000-a-shot assasin, Scaramanga, from Paris to Hong Kong to Macau to Bangkok to Scaramanga's island in the Gulf of Tonkin off China. There they must go one-on-one with the Man with the Golden Gun in his Funhouse of Death.

This is one of the best modules in Victory Games' ***James Bond 007*** series. The designers have finally come up with an original, unexpected twist to the typical movie storyline. Being unable to give a complete description without giving something away to possible participants, I will say that the gamemaster should *not* let his players know they are playing ***The Man with the Golden Gun,*** but try to put it across (at least at the beginning) as a module of his own design. It is remarkable to see the amount of detail that Kern and Peterson have put into ***The Man with the Golden Gun.*** Their drawings and maps of the Martial Arts Temple, Hai Fat's estate, and especially Scaramanga's stronghold (complete with the Funhouse) match those in the movie almost exactly, so much so that you can follow most of the sequences in the movie on your game maps. The Funhouse, scene of the final showdown (or showdowns, depending on the number of players), is well thought out; each character even has a different Maze Reaction Primary Chance. It may take a little work on the gamemaster's part, but the Funhouse is probably the most interesting scene from any of Victory's ***007*** modules to date.

There are very few problems in this module, and most of those are minor. The Mirror Maze in the Funhouse is really hard to run, as it's not quite clear what the circular things on the map in this area are: If they're "two-sided revolving mirrors" then there are three times as many as there are supposed to be, based on the description. Some players might object to being forced to shoot at certain targets in the Funhouse (although there really isn't any other way to handle the surprise targets that pop up).

All in all, ***The Man with the Golden Gun*** ranks up there in the top three of the eight ***007*** modules, along with ***Live and Let Die*** and ***Octopussy***. It's best as a head-to-head adventure, with a skilled (very skilled) "00" agent. Interesting, well-developed characters and a plot set up to handle almost any contingency make playing a real pleasure.

—Steve Crow

GOLDFINGER II — THE MAN WITH THE MIDAS TOUCH (Victory Games, Inc.); $8. Designed by Robert Kern. Supplement to ***James Bond 007***. 48-page scenario booklet, eight mission sheets in envelope, gamemaster screen. For one to three players plus gamemaster; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

The disappearance of three well-known physicists, and the death by skin suffocation — his body covered by gold paint — of the M.I.6 agent assigned to guard a fourth, puts the player-agents on the trail of . . . whom? Goldfinger? One of his operatives, carrying out a contingency plan? Some previously-unknown third person? A slim trail of clues leads from Mexico City to Pamplona to Turkey, until you encounter the final secret of "the man with the Midas touch."

Goldfinger II can be played either as a sequel to Victory's ***Goldfinger*** or on its own. If you play it as a sequel, Robert Kern has designed it so it can be played as written no matter what the consequences of ***Goldfinger***'s conclusion were.

Goldfinger II is far better than its predecessor for a number of reasons. The locales are more exotic and add more to the adventure than those in ***Goldfinger***. The plot is a lot more intricate than that of ***Goldfinger*** and, unless the characters either find a particular clue or are extremely suspicious, it's sure to keep the agents guessing right up to the denouement.

On the other hand, that denouement (which involves tricking the players into sending a particular message) comes rather quickly after they've accomplished the transmission, and there's very little they can do other than escape. Also, in a careless move, one of the Privileged Henchmen appears on the box cover, but also appears in a picture on one of the player handouts at a point when the players are not supposed to know he's important.

Overall, ***Goldfinger II***, while not the best of Victory's ***James Bond 007*** movie adventures, is far from the worst, and a good addition to any GM's secret agent RPG library. While the continuity connections with Goldfinger really makes mention of him in some other secret agent RPG unsuitable, this

Point/Counterpoint

THRILLING LOCATIONS (Victory Games, Inc.); $9. Designed, developed, and edited by Robert Kern and Michael E. Moore. Supplement to ***James Bond 007***. 148-page book. Published 1985.

A combination of lavish color photos, black-and-whites, and James Talbot artwork, ***Thrilling Locations*** deals not so much with the exotic cities of the world detailed in the basic rulebook and ***For Your Information*** supplement as with "locales" so common to the James Bond milieu: casinos, hotels, restaurants, trains, boats, and planes. Statistics for NPCs found in such locales (casino owners, waiters, stewardesses, etc.) are provided, as are different random encounters in each of the locales, designed to be inserted into any ongoing adventure.

Thrilling Locations is, quite simply, *the* most useful supplement or adventure for any aspiring ***James Bond 007*** scenario designer. A plethora of useful material (sprinkled with comments by James Bond and other assorted characters) could either be inserted into an existing Victory Games module — one could imagine a player stopping into the English casino given here before embarking on a mission, or staying at one of the many hotels given — or it could be used as the beginning of a mission (a player might meet a contact in a restaurant to pick up an important message). Rules are provided for battles atop or inside trains, as well as within a pressurized airplane compartment or at a busy airport terminal. There are such odd tidbits as adapting the Burger Hargraves 125' Cruiser as a Major Villain headquarters and how to handle freefall combat, shown in *Moonraker*.

There's really very little to fault ***Thrilling Locations*** on. Several of the NPCs described might have been given Fields of Experience as well as weaknesses and idiosyncrasies. And I wish that some of the special combat/chase rules, such as those for fights on traintops, had been given in previous modules where they would have been useful (such as ***Octopussy***). The rules for the various types of gambling, while useful, seem somewhat a waste of space: they really have no effect on the success of your Gambling skill rolls, and the rules could easily be found in any local library by interested persons.

Overall, though, ***Thrilling Locations*** is an excellent buy, not only for ***James Bond 007*** players but for those who play ***Top Secret, Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes***, or any other secret-agent RPG. The general advice, such as improvising security precautions when staying at one's favorite hotel, is useful as it stands, and with a little bit of tinkering you can adapt the oddities of the *007* combat and chase rules to other RPGs.

—Steve Crow

The latest supplement for Victory Games' ***James Bond 007*** RPG is, taking a hint from Ian Fleming's similarly-titled book, ***Thrilling Locations***. The book gives detailed descriptions of nine casinos, hotels, and restaurants — from the Casino de Monte Carlo to the MGM Grand Hotel — plus capsule descriptions of a number of other "great" hotels and restaurants around the world, all places one might expect to encounter James Bond or his fellow agents or nemeses. Specific GM notes (on gambling, for instance, in the casino section), encounter tables, and NPCs are also provided for each major location, as are floor plans of the various establishments covered. Following the section on places are separate chapters on how to get there by train, boat, and plane. Travel via the Orient Express, yacht, or SST is covered, along with encounters on trains, at airports, or at sea. Deck plans for the Orient Express, a Burger Hargraves Cruiser, a Regent Air Jet, an SST, a 747 and an air terminal are also provided, as are guidelines on designing a major villain's ship — even down to new major weaponry (torpedoes, depth charges, 40mm cannon, etc.).

The size of this book is impressive for the price, even though a lot of its contents are fluff (see below). The gaming information in the various chapters provide the supplement's main worth. The rules on creating the major villain's cruiser will prove the most use to GMs and players. The maps and deck plans can be used with just about any contemporary RPG that might take players to such areas (or on a train, boat, or plane). And ***James Bond*** GMs might derive some use from the encounter tables and NPCs in a pinch, if they haven't time to prepare their own.

Unfortunately, there isn't enough of this sort of material. Too much of the book is devoted to the generic descriptions of the too few "thrilling locations" of the title, or to related nongaming material. Any GM with access to a public library's travel section and a couple dollars in change — or who took the time and a few stamps to write to a chamber of commerce or three — could get as much (or more) data on these places as this book offers. The color photos, obviously taken from publicity brochures, are useless fluff and aren't even bound in the same sections as the places they illustrate. And placing Sheriff Pepper and Plenty O'Toole on *every* encounter table in the book — Pepper might even be found floating on an inner tube in the middle of the ocean! — is stretching beyond the bounds of even the ludicrous depths the more recent Moore Bond films have plumbed. The supplement would have been much more useful had it focused on thrilling *cities*, then given *gaming* info on specific hot spots in these burgs, beyond the bare bones in the basic game and GM supplement.

Maybe I just expect too much of Victory Games, but ***Thrilling Locations*** is a disappointment. Particularly devoted Bond GMs with ten bucks to burn might find it worthwhile. Others should save their cash for a trip to the local library.

—William A. Barton

can easily be taken care of for adaptation to other games: Simply remove the Goldfinger-related master villain of ***Goldfinger II*** and replace with your own favorite head honcho.

—Steve Crow

A VIEW TO A KILL (Victory Games, Inc.) $8. No designer credited. Adventure for ***James Bond 007***. 48-page scenario booklet, eight mission sheets, gamemaster screen. For one or two players plus gamemaster; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Released within three days of the movie (at least in this neck of the woods — the cornfields of Iowa), ***A View to a Kill*** tells the thrilling tale of intrigue and deception at Zorin Enterprises as its ruthless owner, Max Zorin, plots to gain control of microchip production worldwide. The player-agents must locate a "00" agent presumed dead in Siberia, then attend a horse sale in France after lunching at the Eiffel Tower, and finally travel to San Francisco to discover what Zorin's "Project Main Strike" really is.

If this all sounds remarkably familiar to moviegoers, then the module will *read* even more familiarly. It is no surprise that Michael Moore, the "Development Editor," had his name tucked safely out of sight on the inside front page of the scenario booklet. To judge from the amount of work that went into ***A View to a Kill***, the movie people must have informed Victory Games of its plot about four weeks before they had to get the scenario to the printers. Absent is *any* spark of the originality which Gerard Klug, Robert Kern, Brian Peterson, and others have managed to imbue into Victory's first six movie adaptations as far as plot twists and development of non-player characters are concerned. A couple of minor alterations are thrown in, but they are insignificant.

For some odd reason Victory decided to use photos from the movies for the first time, but since they are under contractual obligations not to portray any recognizable actors or actresses from the movies, almost all of the photos are cutoff head shots of Roger Moore, back or distance shots of Grace Jones, etc. The only thing the photos really do is aid the James Talbot art critics of the world, as they make his work look particularly shoddy. Speaking of Mr. Talbot, while his portrayals of characters from the movies have, prior to this, managed to resemble the actors in questions without being legally actionable (especially his work for ***Live and Let Die***), he has failed miserably on this one. Grace Jones/May Day has acquired a truly atrocious afro with a green stripe down the middle, while Christopher Walken/Max Zorin looks more like a friendly maitre d', the kind that smilingly waits at his table until he gets your tip. Oddly enough, Dr. Mortner, a minor character in the movie, fares the best.

In short, the only possible reasons I could see to buy ***A View to a Kill*** are a) if you want to pick up on all the things you missed or were confused about in the movie and no one gets around to novelizing it (yes, folks, it follows the movie's script that exactly); b) if you want to play out the exact sequence of the movie and, as a halfway-competent gamemaster, can't design an adventure based on the movie yourself; or c) you want to have a complete collection of ***007*** modules and accessories. Otherwise, wait for a better module from Victory.

—Steve Crow

FACE OF THE ENEMY (TSR, Inc.); $6. Designed by Ken Rolston. ***Star Frontiers*** adventure. 32-page 8½" x 11" booklet and 11" x 25" referee shield/adventure maps. For two or more players and a referee; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

Face of the Enemy is an intricate adventure which has a number of "sub-adventures" that can be played out over the course of several game sessions. It is the second part of the "Beyond the Frontier" series which began in ***Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes***. The adventure involves the investigation of a previously undetected village on the planet Mahg Mar, just about 30 kilometers from the repair site of the *Eleanor Moraes*. From there, the action heats up, culminating in a daring raid to capture a Sathar mothership.

Just when you thought it was safe to ignore ***Star Frontiers*** as a viable science-fiction RPG, Rolston comes along and turns out another adventure using the system which "works." It just goes to show that a good writer can make a bad game interesting. There is a wealth of reusable material in ***Face of the Enemy***. There is an alien culture, insights into the villainous Sathar, and some interesting artifacts which could be used for further adventuring. While it starts off at a relatively slow pace, the ending is a frenzied race against the clock with devastating repercussions should the characters fail.

While ***Face of the Enemy*** does present an interesting series of events involving the characters, the manner in which they occur is linear *and* completely dependent upon character cooperation with the referee. While it is assumed that the players are going to follow through with the referee's lead, there is always the feeling that they are not really controlling their characters' destiny, but are mere pawns being manipulated by some divine hand in a cosmic scheme (and does anyone really use those "boxed" player descriptions?). I also have a personal gripe with the way the wilderness adventure on Mahg Mar is shrugged off. The referee is given a few encounters to throw at the characters, but is told that ". . . ***Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes*** gives a more detailed treatment of wilderness adventuring . . ."

Obviously, ***Face of the Enemy*** isn't the answer to all of the problems inherent with ***Star Frontiers***, but the good outweighs the bad. A little pre-game preparation can correct the inflexible storyline, and if you don't have ***Mutiny*** (which you should), adding a few more obstacles — rather than carnivorous beasties — will make the slow beginning as much a challenge as the ending. I recommend it to anyone willing to *make* the adventure work, or to those referees with players who enjoy being led by the hand through some very interesting scenery.

—Jerry Epperson

PLAY-BY-MAIL

LANDLORDS (Quest Computer Services); $2 rulebook, $3/turn, $3/set-up (plus $10 refundable deposit). Designed by Steve Safigan. 19-page 5½" x 8½" rulebook. Computer-moderated play-by-mail game. For ten players; turnaround time two weeks (a slow, three-week option is available). Since 1984.

Finding themselves in a barbaric land, players compete to be the first to recover three treasures located among the 30 castles in the land. Each player begins with seven captains, a fortress with 100 or so troops, and three keys which will open the vaults where his treasures are to be found. Neutral captains, fortresses, and villages are located throughout the land. Each player knows the general location of the castles containing his treasures, but they are scattered, and each is defended by 200 or more troops. Clearly, then, the challenge is to develop the might to conquer the castles and retrieve the treasures. Fortresses and villages produce gold which can be used to hire men. But peasants need to be fed (and food is only available at the villages).

The novelty of ***LandLords***, which distinguishes it from other PBM games, is the unique objectives. Since each player must recover his own designated treasures, the winner will not necessarily be the player with the strongest economy or military force (strength is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for victory). Winning will require careful logistics to keep fortresses fed, aggressive military action to build a broad economic base, diplomacy with other players and, ultimately, a sound strategic timing in the final race to secure the treasures. Technically, the game is well produced. The rulebook is lucid, the turn sheet uncomplicated. The five-color printout (complete with map) is attractive and functional — no wasted time interpreted the print-out or mapping.

Those who seek a quick-action "shoot-'em-up" game will be disappointed with ***LandLords***. In the early moves, limited strength, distances, and the long building process requires patience and attention to the logistics of feeding peasants. While many players may tire, I find the lower tactical intensity to give the game a subtle flavor. Still, that's a matter of taste. Another problem, a mechanical combat resolution system, has been cured by a recent rule change. My only objection is the turn fee accounting system: Players must purchase labels in advance to be attached to each turn.

LandLords is slow-paced at the start, but it stands the test of time. And for those seeking combat, there's plenty of chance for that in the midgame. A good addition to the family of PBM.

—Richard Derham

MINIATURES

CALL OF CTHULHU MINIATURES (Grenadier Models); $2.50 per pack. One or two figures per pack. Set 213 — *Cthonians* (2), Set 214 — *Nyarlathotep*, Set 215 — *Tsathoggua*, Set 216 —

The fast-paced play-by-mail game of Interstellar Combat and Conflict

Write for free information or send $2.00 for the rulebook and a complete game description

SIGIL

P.O. Box 1903, Indianapolis, Indiana U.S.A. 46206

Dimensional Shambler & Old One (2), Set 217 — *Spawn of Cthulhu*, Set 218 — *Hunting Horror*. 25mm miniatures for Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu*** roleplaying game. Released 1985.

THEY have returned. This time there are only six of them, but any more than that and the men in white coats would be standing outside of game shops everywhere, ready to haul away unfortunate viewers of Grenadier's latest releases in the ***Call of Cthulhu*** line. This time the public is introduced to such entities as the dreaded plant-like Old Ones, a Dimensional Shambler, a pair of Cthonians, a bloated and horrible Spawn of Cthulhu, and a Hunting Horror of Nyarlathotep. And speaking of the Big "N," Grenadier has chosen that particular god and his pal Tsathoggua to be the first of the Lovecraftian alien demon-gods to be released. Good heavens, did I say *released?*

Anyway, like the earlier releases in this line, these figures capture the creatures' alien ugliness splendidly. The detail is again absolutely stunning, especially on the many tiny tentacles of the Old One. Along with the lack of excessive flash, this has come to be the norm with recent Grenadier releases. And at last you can show your players what a Dimensional Shambler looks like, instead of reading them the very sketchy description in the rulebook and telling them to wing it from there. The Spawn of Cthulhu figure is one of the finest renderings of this type of critter I have ever seen. The Nyarlathotep figure also just happens to be one of the stars of Chaosium's latest campaign, ***Masks of Nyarlathotep***. Could this be some sort of plot?

On the down side, though, the Old One figure is rather silly-looking until it has been assembled and painted. The scale is miles off on the Cthonians, the Spawn of Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep, and Tsathoggua. And even though you can show your characters a Dimensional Shambler, don't expect them to cringe, as this beastie looks too big and dumb and slow and sleepy to be terrifying. As with the earlier blister packs there is no painting guide, so you're pretty much on your own. And unfortunately, due to their larger sizes, there are fewer figures per pack.

As there are no human figures among these releases (maybe in a digestive tract or two . . .), it would seem that these monstrosities will only be of interest to Cthulhu collectors and gamers. Those folks should be more than happy with these unearthly beauties.

—Kevin Ross

CITADEL MINIATURES (Games Workshop); average $1.25 per blister-packed figure or $10.00 per boxed set. 25mm metal miniatures. Sculpted by Brian Ansell, Tony Ackland, Alan and Michael Perry, *et al.* Released 1984, 1985.

Citadel Miniatures are 25mm figures produced by Games Workshop of Great Britain. They were previously manufactured under license by Ral Partha, but now Games Workshop US imports them directly to this country. Ral Partha still produces some of the older Citadel figures that are no longer produced by Games Workshop, but all-new Citadel miniatures are only available from Games Workshop's US branch. Citadel miniatures are oversized 25mm figures, which is typical of most firms from Britain and the US. They are relatively free from flash, although some of the figures do have thick flash buildup where a weapon meets the base of the figure.

Overall, the new Citadel figures are vastly improved from the ones I used to purchase a few years back. The sculpting is much cleaner, especially for the armored figures. Most of the miniatures are posed in a fighting stance, and many have two weapons at the ready. Citadel miniatures have long been noted for the "personality" that is sculpted into the faces of the figures. This is especially evident in the Dwarves and Knights of Chaos. The new figures seem to reflect the influence of Games Workshop's ***Warhammer*** miniatures system. Many outstanding, unique figures have been released for the ***WH*** system, such as the Chaos Beastmen and Monsters that look like they just stepped out of a Michael Moorcock novel. The fantastically bizarre armor and faces of the Chaos Knights make them perfect for ***D&D*** anti-paladins or other FRPG villains. The Dark Elf line has a real rarity, a female crossbow user — the only example of its type that I have ever been able to locate. Citadel is also producing a line of acrylic paint that is very good. The colors mix well and cover with one coat, and Citadel has succeeded in creating water-based metallic colors that really look good.

There are only a couple of problems with the Citadel line. First, most of the figures are fighters, which is probably so that they can be used in a ***Warhammer*** scenario. Many of the typical dungeon-exploring figures are not currently available from Citadel, although they do have a nice boxed set of adventurers to fill this gap. Since Citadel is currently releasing more figures per month than any other firm, the odds are good that they will fill in the gaps in their lines as time goes by. Citadel has just gotten the official license for both ***D&D*** and *Lord of the Rings* figures, so this should result in some nice miniatures in the near future. Another slight problem arises if you want to order Citadel miniatures by mail. The figures are not numbered individually, but are grouped by type into categories. You need a copy of the *Citadel Compendium*, which has illustrations of the figures, in order to place an order. Games Workshop recommends that you photocopy the pages with the figures that you want and circle the ones you intend to order. While the system is a little clumsy, Games Workshop runs a very efficient mail-order service, and I have not encountered any problems yet in my orders.

Overall, I highly recommend Citadel miniatures to gamers who use any FRPG system, and especially if they use the ***Warhammer*** rules.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

APOCALYPSE WARRIORS (Ral Partha, 5938 Carthage Court, Cincinnati, OH 45212); 13 individual bubble-packed figures. $1.10-1.30 each. Sculpted by Charles Bradford Gorby.

THE OUTCASTS (Rafm, 19 Concession Street, Cambridge, ONT N1R 2G6 Canada). Nine individual bubble-packed figures, $1 each. Two sets: *Outcasts' Blade Chariot*, $7; *Pongo Gutbag on the Litter of Doom*, $6. Sculpted by Bob Murch.

SURVIVAL FORCE (Castle Creations, 1322 Cranwood Sq. South, Columbus, OH 43229). Six bubble-packs of three figures each. $3 per pack.

Post-holocaust games, set in the future after a nuclear and/or biochemical war has destroyed civilization as we know it, present a problem for the gamer who uses miniatures as a playing aid. The blend of high-tech and primitive, of manufactured and improvised, is unique to this type of game. Gamers used to glean most of the miniatures they used from lines made from other game types — an unsatisfactory system, since the miniatures didn't capture the spirit of the game.

No more. Three companies — Castle Creations, Ral Partha, and Rafm — offer appropriate miniatures. The latest Grenadier *Bulletin* hints they might also make an offering, but that remains to be seen.

From a technical standpoint, all three offered lines are good to excellent. They are state-of-the-art, with good detail, minimal casting flash, and compatibly scaled size. The major difference is in the overall gestalt of the lines.

The *Outcasts*, offered by Rafm, have a *Road Warrior* feel. Odd hairdos, primitive weapons, and little technological detail make them usable as reverted tribes/gangs. They can also fit into many fantasy games as bandits — only three would breathe a whiff of anachronism into an FRPG. The line has nine individual figures and two sets. It contains beautifully done figures ("Pinhead," with a compound bow and a spiked haircut, is my favorite). It is, however, limited, and does not provide a high-tech option.

The *Survival Force*, offered by Castle Creations, is more technological. Its *Survival Forces* (18 figures) and *Encounters* (6 figures) could be used for present-day military/spy games as well as for post-holocaust. Their feel is closer to ***Twilight: 2000*** than ***Gamma World***. Castle Creations' *Independents* and *Mutants* (15 figures) are high-tech but well suited to the "after things fell apart" model. And the *Warriors of the Devastation* (three figures) fill the punk rock/road warrior niche that has become standard in these games.

The *Apocalypse Warriors*, by Ral Partha, are perhaps the most flexible. Eight of the 13 figures come with a weapons set that includes a modern weapon (M-16 or Uzi), primitive weapon (crossbow or flintlock), archaic weapon (sword or axe), improvised weapon (tire iron or cleaver), and a bizarre weapon (chainsaw or spiked bat). This allows the gamer to adapt the figure to his campaign. Their armor and clothing have an improvised feel that lends itself to the spirit of the games.

We're fairly fortunate in this area. Detail and casting quality needn't be sacrificed to get what we want. So look them over, pick what suits your campaign. And enjoy the future, however bleak it may be.

—Bob Kindel

SOFTWARE

KNIGHT OF DIAMONDS (Sir-Tech Software Inc., 6 Main St., Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669); $34.95. Designed by Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead. Second scenario of "Wizardry" series. Requires ***Wizardry*** ("Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord") for play. Disk for 48K Apple IIs, IBM PC; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

The second ***Wizardry*** scenario involves the saving of a city. In order to do so, your characters' assignment, if they choose to accept it, is to retrieve "The Staff of Gnilda" from the rubble of the castle.

The first supplement to ***Wizardry*** is shorter than the original, but still as good. Although the dungeon is only six levels deep and the same amount of floor space per level as before, it is still interesting and varied. The new problem areas — e.g., anti-magic zones and puzzles — test your knowledge as well as your characters' abilities. The weapons and armor of the Knight of Diamonds are the most powerful in the game yet. The scenario is set for *mixed group* characters of high level and is well done.

Being just a scenario, this product lacks some of the color of the original. The small screen view is still there, with small pictures of even the largest of creatures. Many of the illustrations do not represent what the creatures should look like; e.g., the various tigers do not look like tigers. The packaging disappears among my other games, being only a piece of cardboard folded over. Finally, the wondrous weapons and armor of the Knight of Diamonds may kill the group before they may use them, and for the sake of balance cannot be taken out of the dungeon.

Still, I recommend this scenario. This is an interesting and challenging adventure for higher-level ***Wizardry*** characters. There is nothing like the holy ceremony of the receipt of the Staff of Gnilda, but still, thank God for my 250+ level bishops (i.e., super-high-level bishops created by the "Bishop Bug").

—Philip L. Wing

SCANNER

News from the World of Gaming

FBI Selling Much of Blade Line

Blade, a division of Flying Buffalo Inc., is selling "some of [their] more popular products" to other companies, according to Buffalo president Rick Loomis. Negotiations for the sale of ***Nuclear War, Mercenaries, Spies, & Private Eyes,*** and the "Catalyst" series of roleplaying supplements are under way. Blade will probably retain ***Tunnels & Trolls*** "for various complicated contractual reasons," Loomis said.

"We are NOT going out of business," Loomis wrote in late June in a letter offering Blade's line for sale. The letter was sent by electronic mail to several adventure game companies. "One of the reasons we are doing this is because our play-by-mail business is doing so well it is keeping me too busy to pay proper attention to . . . the Blade line," Loomis said in the letter.

In other FBI news, the publishing and play-by-mail divisions have moved to a new location in Scottsdale, AZ. "It's lower rent — I own the building," said Loomis. The new phone number is (602) 945-6917. Flying Buffalo's retail game store remains in the old location in Tempe, AZ.

Sorcerer's Apprentice magazine, which has not published an issue in over a year, is now officially defunct. Subscribers will receive a copy of Adventure Games' ***Pentantastar*** boardgame in compensation — "and we'll give refunds as well to customers who aren't satisfied with that," Loomis added. "We don't have time to work on [*Sorcerer's Apprentice*]; magazines don't make money."

Buffalo has *Pentantastar* because Adventure Games effectively became a division of Flying Buffalo earlier this year, when company founder Dave Arneson (co-designer of ***Dungeons & Dragons***) was sent on a one-year religious mission to San Francisco. Arneson "will be able to continue writing game materials," Loomis said, but could not keep up with a publishing operation. Buffalo is warehousing and selling Adventure Games' entire line (***Pentantastar, Adventures in Fantasy,*** and several historical games). Blade is publishing a scenario pack for AG's ***Johnny Reb*** miniatures game late this year.

Loomis is now able to run ***Starweb*** tournaments at conventions, though "it would be expensive." Interested convention organizers should contact him at the number above.

News in Brief

Hurricane Hits Zocchi Warehouse

"We lost 13,000 copies of ***Battle of Britain,*** most of ***Swords & Glory,*** and many back issues of *Space Gamer* — now there may be gaps in the run," said distributor-publisher Lou Zocchi, whose Gulfport, MS, warehouse was hit by a hurricane September 2. The storm ripped off four sections of the roof and water-damaged many games, magazines, and other products. Zocchi estimated losses in excess of $30,000, but "I don't know just what it is yet."

Business operations have relocated to 1512 30th Avenue, Gulfport, MS 39501. Since much desk paperwork and "a private order or two" were destroyed, customers who placed orders with Zocchi around August 25 to 27 are urged to "reestablish contact" to determine whether the order has been lost.

Insurance will cover the damaged products, Zocchi said, but the three-week interruption in business is not covered. However, contrary to rumors and speculation, Zocchi is still in business: "We're here, we're coming back," he said.

Zocchi took pains to point out that the hurricane will not delay release of the Zocchihedron, the new 100-sided die. "It should be out by Christmas," he said.

Another Unusual License

Pacesetter, Ltd. has signed a licensing contract with Elvira, television's Mistress of the Dark. Under terms of the contract, Pacesetter will produce a 96-page perfect-bound book titled ***Evenings of Terror with Elvira.***

Elvira is a syndicated horror-movie hostess appearing in 50-60 national television markets.

A press release from Pacesetter says: "***Evenings of Terror with Elvira*** includes nine game adventures for use with Pacesetter's ***Chill*** roleplaying game. Elvira introduces each adventure with a photograph and short narrative. Each adventure is suitable for use as an individual evening of entertainment or as an episode in an ongoing campaign.

"***Evenings of Terror with Elvira*** will be released in mid-October, 1985, in time to reach retail shelves by Halloween. It will retail for $10."

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PBM News Briefs

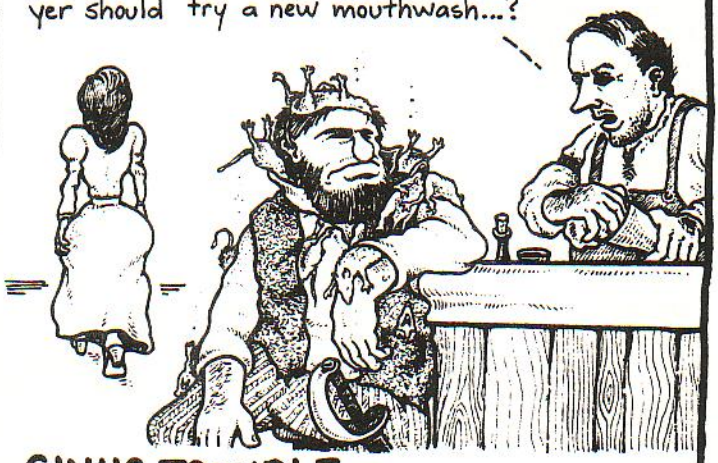
Play-by-mail rights to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* have been purchased by Entertainment Concepts, Inc. (***Silverdawn, Star Trek — The Correspondence Game***). Sign-up packages were being offered at this year's Gen Con in Milwaukee, Aug. 22-25. Other PBM news, relayed to us by *Space Gamer*'s PBM editor, Bob McLain:

- ***Offworld*** is apparently defunct. Three correspondents have reported cashed checks but no turns. ***Skaal*** is also out of action, according to McLain. "Viking Games is still dead," he adds, "and still promising a 'rapid comeback.'" The company operated ***Manifest Destiny, Prokhoravka, Ancient Campaigns,*** and ***High Tide.***
- ***Angrelmar, Court of Kings*** (reviewed in *SG* 71) is still in business. The company was apparently on hiatus but has now resumed operations, albeit with due dates three months apart.
- ***World of Velgor*** has changed hands. Now known as ***The Melding***, it's being run by Kelstar Enterprises (Box 455, Zephyrhills, FL 34283). The original moderator, Bruce Abrahams of Comstar Enterprises (Box 601062, N. Miami Beach, FL 33160), has begun an enhanced version of ***Velgor,*** called ***Venom.***
- And lastly, ***Midgard***, a new PBM, will be the first in this country to be moderated by a Japanese company.

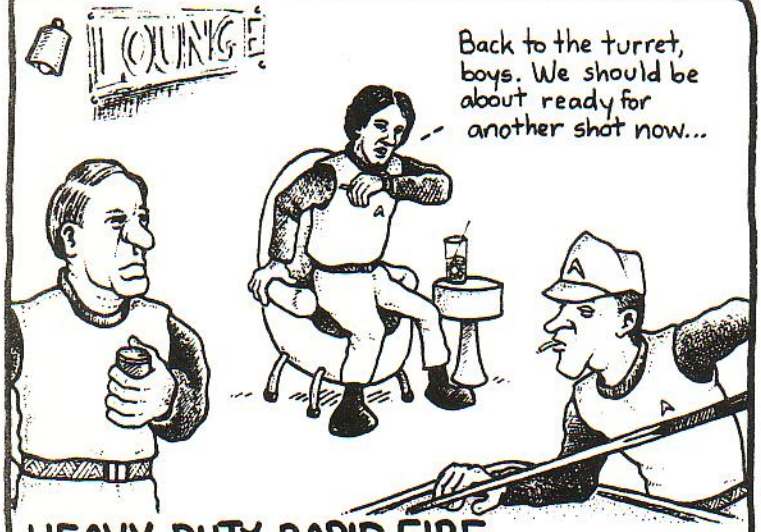
MURPHY'S RULES

GBLRSH SMRZL, MOM 'N DAD --
In RUNEQUEST III (Avalon Hill), two people from the same village, speaking the same language, have a 1 in 3 chance of totally misunderstanding each other. (-- Ralph Sizer)

Rejected again, aye, Long John? Mebbe yer should try a new mouthwash...?



SINUS TROUBLE--
In FGU's adventure THE KING OVER THE WATER, a character must make a Sense Acuity roll to detect a pile of sixteen dead rats. (-- Steve LaPrade)



HEAVY-DUTY RAPID FIRE--
In TRAVELLER (GDW) a spaceship's weapons can fire only once every sixteen minutes. Most battles last several hours. (-- David C. Seagraves)

SLANTED MEDIA COVERAGE --
In the Vietnam roleplaying game RECON (RPG, Inc.) journalists and TV cameramen can be found only in bars. (-- Steve LaPrade)

MAN TO MAN™

Fantasy Combat from GURPS™

***Man to Man*, the exciting medieval combat system from Steve Jackson's *GURPS*, The Generic Universal RolePlaying System. Play *Man to Man* as a game in its own right, or use it as a combat module for any fantasy or medieval roleplaying adventure.**

Rogan drew back the arrow *[Ready maneuver]* as the axeman sprinted toward him *[sprinting bonus to movement]*. He let fly. *[Attack maneuver — "snap shot."]* The shieldless foe ducked to the side — too slowly. *[Dodge defense roll — failed.]* He staggered as the shaft hit his leg *[hit location — optional advanced rule]* . . . but he kept coming.

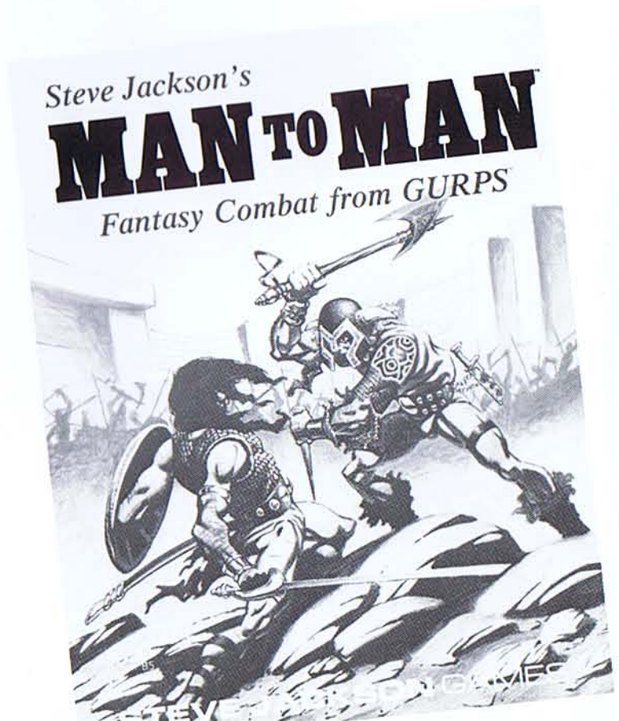
Cursing *[free action]*, Rogan dropped his bow *[free action]* and drew his bastard sword *[Step and Ready action]*. He took a pace backward *[movement allowed after action]* as the big axeman came closer *[Move maneuver]*. He reached for his shield *[Ready maneuver]*, but realized he wouldn't have time to get it onto his arm *[readying time for shields equal to the shield's passive defense]*. Ah, well — he'd fight shieldless and use his sword two-handed. He had the greater reach *[bastard sword 1- or 2-yard reach; axe 1-yard reach]*.

Brandishing his axe, the barbaric foeman advanced. Then, with a shout, Rogan unleased two lightning strokes *[All-Out attack — two attacks in one turn]*. Even one hit could end the fight *[bastard sword, 2-handed: +2 to Rogan's basic swinging damage; hits that penetrate get a 50% bonus]*. But, to Rogan's dismay, the barbarian sidestepped the first attack *[Dodge defense roll]* and deflected the second with the knife in his left hand *[Parry defense roll]*.

Seeing Rogan wide open *[no active defense after an all-out attack]*, the barbarian lunged past the blade with a berserker charge, hacking viciously *[All-Out Attack, one attack at +4 to hit]*. The axe bit deeply into Rogan's shoulder, numbing it *[Crippling Injuries, advanced rules]*. He staggered *[Stunned on hits equal to half your HT]* but recovered *[recovery on successful HT roll]*, gripping the sword in his left hand *[-4 to attack rolls]*.

Grinning, the barbarian lifted his axe *[Ready Weapon maneuver]*. But he, in turn, was open. Praying to his gods, Rogan thrust *[bastard sword, 1-handed: +1 to Rogan's basic thrusting damage; hits that penetrate armor are doubled]*. The blow was true — but scraped along the foe's armor and failed to bite *[passive defense deflects blow]*. Somehow, Rogan dodged the return blow and thrust again. This time, his blade sank deep into the axeman's chest. Staggering *[movement reduced when HT drops to 3 or less]* the big axeman backpedaled, raising his axe *[Ready Weapon maneuver]*. Cautiously, Rogan moved in *[Step and Feint maneuver]*. The axeman watched him grimly *[All-Out Defense maneuver]*. Then Rogan swung. The axeman reeled, but stayed on his feet *[successful Health roll when HT reaches zero]*. Gamely, he moved toward Rogan.

Marveling at the man's bravery, Rogan turned his sword and struck with the flat *[damage as club: no bonus for blows that penetrate armor]*. Unable to dodge *[Dodge defense reduced when movement reduced]*, the barbarian took the blow on the head *[head blows do double damage]*. The axe dropped from nerveless fingers *[automatic unconsciousness when HT goes below zero]*. Rogan raised his bloody sword in salute and looked for another foe.



X-hvy (4) = 20×ST 180 | L | T

ACTIVE DEFENSES		
DODGE	PARRY	BLOCK
5	8	5
= Move	Weapon/2	Shield/3

DAMAGE RESISTANCE

Armor HEAVY LEATHER: 2
TOUGHNESS : 1
: TOTAL 3

SKILLS

	Pt. Cost	Level
SHORTSWORD	4	16
KNIFE	1	15

WEAPONS AND POSSESSIONS

Item	Damage Type	Amt.	Skill Level	$	Wt.
SHORTSWORD	CUT	1-1	16	400	2
	IMP	1-2	16		
LARGE KNIFE	CUT	1-3	15		
	IMP	1-2	15		
CROSSBOW	IMP	1+2	17		
QUIVER + 10 BOLTS	-	-	-		
SMALL SHIELD					
HVY LEATHER ARMOR				350	20
Totals: $ 1,010			Lbs. 38+		

WEAPON RANGES

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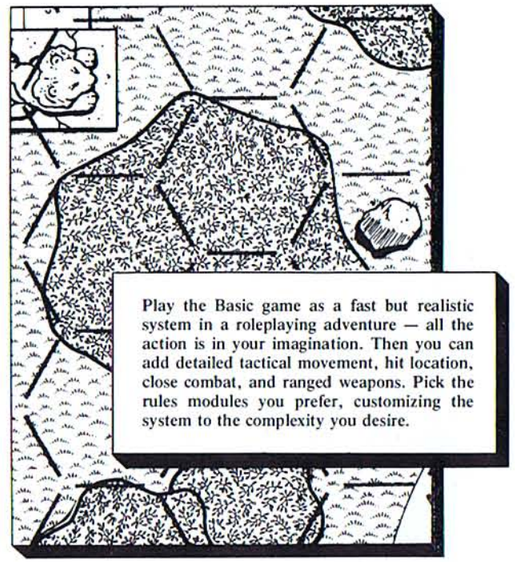
			1	$400
			1	
			1	$ 20
			1	

FENCING (DX–5): *See p. 24 for Fencing parry rules.*

Foil	impaling	thrust+1	1	$400
Rapier	impaling	thrust+1	1, 2	$500
Saber	cutting	swing	1	$400
	impaling	thrust+1	1	

BROADSWORD (DX–5 or Shortsword–2)

Broadsword	cutting	swing+1	1	$500
	crushing	thrust+1	1	
Thrusting "	cutting	swing+1	1	$600
	impaling	thrust+2	1	
Bastard sword	cutting	swing+1	1, 2	$650



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